

THE  
TEMPLE  
CLASSICS



Edited by  
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GOLLANCZ  
M.A.



THESSS  
LITTLE  
FLOWERS  
ÖF SAINT  
FRANCIS  
NEWLY TRAN-  
SLATED OUT OF  
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# THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

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## Chapter I

*In the name of our Lord Jesu Christ the Crucified, and of his Virgin Mother Mary. In this book are found certain little Flowers, Miracles and devout ensamples of the glorious poor little one of Christ, Saint Francis, and of certain his holy Companions, to the praise of Jesu Christ. Amen*

**A**T the first, needs must we consider how the St glorious Saint Francis in all the acts of Francis his life was conformed unto Christ the blessed of Assisi one: how even as Christ in the beginning of His preaching chose out twelve Apostles, to contemn all earthly things, to follow him in poverty and other virtues; so Saint Francis in the beginning chose out for the founding of the Order twelve companions, possessors of the deepest poverty. And even as one of the twelve Apostles of Christ, rejected of God, finally hanged himself by the neck; even so one of the twelve companions of Saint Francis, whose name was John of the Chapel, fell away and finally hanged himself by the neck. And unto the elect this is a great ensample and matter for humility and fear; bearing in mind that no man is certain to persevere unto the end

The com- in the grace of God. And even as these holy  
 panions Apostles were altogether wonderful in sanctity  
 of St and humility and full of the Holy Spirit, so  
 Francis these most holy companions of Saint Francis  
 were men of such sanctity, that, from the time  
 of the Apostles until now, the world never saw  
 men so marvellous and so saintly ; in that one  
 of them was caught up into the third heaven,  
 like Saint Paul, and this was Brother Giles ;  
 one of them, to wit Brother Philip Lungo,  
 was touched on the lips by an angel with a  
 coal of fire, as was Isaiah the prophet : one  
 of them, and he was Brother Silvester, spake  
 with God, as one friend doth with another,  
 even as Moses did : one through subtlety of  
 intellect flew up even unto the light of the  
 divine Wisdom, like the eagle, to wit John  
 the Evangelist, and this was the most humble  
 Brother Bernard, who set forth clearly the  
 deep things of Holy Writ : one of them was  
 sanctified of God and canonised in heaven, being  
 yet alive in the world, and he was Brother  
 Ruffino, a gentleman of Assisi : and thuswise  
 were they all favoured with singular marks of  
 sanctity, as is set forth hereafter.

## Chapter II

*Of Brother Bernard of Quintavalle, first companion of St Francis*

THE first companion of Saint Francis was  
 Brother Bernard of Assisi, who was con-  
 verted in this wise : While Saint Francis was

still in the secular habit, albeit he had already Bernard despised the world, and went about being wholly and St held in scorn of men, mortifying his flesh by Francis penances, in so much that by many he was thought foolish and was mocked at as a mad fellow, and was driven away with stones and foul abuse by his kinsfolk and by strangers, yet bore himself patiently amid all manner of ignominy and reproach, as though he were deaf and dumb: Bernard of Assisi, the which was of the noblest, and richest, and wisest in the city, began wisely to take heed unto Saint Francis, how exceeding strong his contempt of the world, how great his patience in the midst of wrongs, so that albeit for a two years' space thus evil intreated of all persons and despised, he ever seemed the more constant; then he began to ponder and to say within himself: "In no wise can it be that this brother hath not abundant grace from God"; so he called him one evening to sup and lodge with him: and Saint Francis consented thereto and supped with him and lodged. And thereat Bernard set it in his heart to watch his sanctity: wherefore he let make ready for him a bed in his own proper chamber, in the which at night-time ever a lamp did burn. And Saint Francis, for to hide his sanctity, when he was come into the chamber, incontinent did throw himself upon the bed and made as though he slept: and likewise Bernard after some short space set himself to lie down and fell to snoring loudly, in fashion as though he slept right soundly. Whereby Saint Francis, thinking truly that Bernard was

St asleep, in his sleep rose up from his bed and set Francis' himself to pray, lifting up his hands and eyes sanctity unto heaven, and with exceeding great devotion and fervour said: "My God, my God." And thus saying and sorely weeping he abode till morning, alway repeating: "My God, my God," and naught beside; and this Saint Francis said, while musing on and marvelling at the excellence of the divine Majesty, which deigned to stoop down to a perishing world and through his poor little Francis purposed to bring a remedy for the salvation of his soul and the souls of others. Therefore illumined by the Holy Spirit, or the spirit of prophecy, foreseeing what great things God would do through him and his Order, and minding him of his own insufficiency and little worth, he cried unto God and besought Him that by His pity and almighty power, without the which the weakness of man may naught avail, He would supply his lack, aid and fulfil what of itself was nothing worth. Bernard seeing, by the light of the lamp, the most devout acts of Saint Francis, and devoutly pondering in his mind the words that he spake, was touched and inspired by the Holy Spirit to change his life; in the morning therefore he called Saint Francis and thus bespake him: "Brother Francis, I am wholly purposed in my heart to leave the world and follow thee in whatsoever thou mayest bid me." Hearing this, Saint Francis rejoiced in spirit, and said: "Bernard, this that thou sayest is a task so great and difficult, that thereof must we seek

counsel of our Lord Jesu Christ, and beseech The test  
Him that He be pleased to show us His will of the  
therein, and teach us how we may bring it to missal  
pass: wherefore let us go together to the  
bishop's house, wherein is a good priest, and  
let us let say the Mass; then let us continue  
in prayer until Tierce, beseeching God that in  
thrice opening of the missal He may reveal  
to us the path it is His will we should  
elect." Bernard made answer that this pleased  
him right well. So fared they forth and  
came to the bishop's house: and after they  
had heard the Mass, and continued praying  
until Tierce, the priest at the bidding of Saint  
Francis took the missal, and making the sign  
of the most holy Cross, opened it thrice in  
the name of our Lord Jesu Christ: and at the  
first opening appeared the words that Christ  
spake in the Gospel to the young man that  
asked concerning the path of perfection: "If  
thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou  
hast, and give to the poor and follow me";  
at the second opening appeared those words  
that Christ spake unto the Apostles when He  
sent them forth to preach: "Take nothing  
for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip,  
neither bread, neither money"; wishing thereby  
to teach them that for their daily bread they  
should set all their hopes on God and fix  
their mind wholly on the preaching of the  
holy Gospel; at the third opening of the  
missal appeared those words that Christ spake:  
"If any man will come after me, let him

I Silvester deny himself, and take up his cross, and  
and St follow me." Then spake Saint Francis unto  
Francis Bernard: "Behold the counsel that Christ  
giveth us: come then and fulfil that which  
thou hast heard: and blessed be our Lord  
Jesu Christ, who hath deigned to show forth  
His own life in the holy Gospel." This  
heard, Bernard went out and sold all that  
he had, and he was very rich; and with  
great joy he gave all his possessions to widows,  
to orphans, to prisoners, to monasteries and  
to hospices, and pilgrims; and in all things  
Saint Francis helped him faithfully and wisely.  
And a certain man whose name was Silvester  
seeing that Saint Francis gave and let give so  
much money to the poor, being moved by greed,  
said to Saint Francis: "Thou hast not paid me  
in full for the stones thou didst buy of me for to  
rebuild the church; therefore pay me now that  
thou hast money. Therewith Saint Francis,  
marvelling at his greed and willing not to stir up  
strife with him, as a true follower of the holy  
Gospel, put his hands into the bosom of  
Bernard; and filled his hands with money,  
which he put into the bosom of Silvester, saying  
that if he wished for more, more would he give  
him. Silvester being content with these, forth-  
with was away and gat him to his house: but in  
the evening bethinking him of what he had done  
throughout the day, and chiding himself for his  
greed, pondering on the fervour of Bernard and  
the sanctity of Saint Francis, he had from God,  
on the night following and two other nights, a

vision on this wise, that from the mouth of Bernard Saint Francis sprang a cross of gold, of which the first follower the top reached unto heaven, and the arms stretched from the East even unto the West. By reason of this vision, he gave away all that he had for the love of God, and became a brother minor, and lived in the Order in such sanctity and grace that he spake with God, as doth one friend with another, whereof Saint Francis oftentimes was witness; the which will be set forth hereafter. Bernard in like manner had such grace of God that oftentimes in contemplation was he caught up to God: and Saint Francis said of him, that he was worthy of all reverence, and that it was he that had founded this Order; inasmuch as he was the first to leave the world, keeping back naught for himself, but giving all unto the poor of Christ, and, when he took on him the Gospel poverty, offering himself naked in the arms of the Crucified; bless we His name, world without end. Amen.

### Chapter III

*How for an evil thought that Saint Francis had against Brother Bernard, he bade the said Brother Bernard tread three times with his feet upon his mouth and on his throat*

THE most devout servant of the Crucified, Saint Francis, through the rigour of his penances and ceaseless tears, had grown wellnigh blind, and could see but little. On a time

Bernard amongst others he hied him from the place  
I heeds not where he was, and went to a place where  
St Fran-  
cis' call Brother Bernard was, for to speak with him  
of things divine: and coming to the place, he  
found that he was at prayer in the wood, all  
lifted up and joined to God. Therewith went  
Saint Francis into the wood and called him.  
“Come,” quoth he, “and speak unto this blind  
man”; and Brother Bernard made him no  
answer; in that being a man of deep con-  
templation, his mind was fixed on things above  
and lifted up to God: but seeing that he had  
grace exceeding rare to speak of God, whereof  
Saint Francis had oftentimes been witness, he  
desired the more to hold parley with him. So  
biding some short space, he called the second  
and the third time after the same fashion; but  
neither time did Brother Bernard hear him,  
and therefore made him no answer, nor came  
unto him; so that Saint Francis departed, a  
little disconsolate and marvelling within himself,  
and complaining for that Bernard, being called  
three times, had not come to him. Departing  
with this thought, Saint Francis, when he was  
gone a little space, said to his companion:  
“Wait here for me”: and he went aside into a  
solitary place hard by and cast himself down in  
prayer, beseeching God that He would make  
known unto him wherefore Brother Bernard  
had made him no answer; and as he prayed,  
there came a voice from God, which said thus:  
“O poor little man, wherefore art thou troubled?  
Should a man leave God for a creature? Brother

Bernard, when thou calledst him, was joined St .  
unto Me ; and could not come to thee thereby Francis  
nor answer thee ; wherefore marvel not that he discon-  
could not speak to thee ; seeing that he was so  
solate  
much lifted out of himself that of thy words he  
heard not one.” Being thus answered of God,  
Saint Francis straightway with great haste re-  
turned unto Brother Bernard, humbly to accuse  
himself of the thought that he had had concern-  
ing him. And beholding him coming towards  
him, Brother Bernard went to meet him and threw  
himself at his feet : then Saint Francis let lift  
him up and told him with great humility the  
thought and trouble of mind that he had had  
concerning him, and how God had answered  
him therein ; wherefore he thuswise made an  
end : “ I command thee by holy obedience that  
thou do whate’er I bid thee.” Brother Bernard,  
fearing that Saint Francis might o’erstep the  
bounds, as was his wont, in what he bade him  
do, fain would have escaped this obedience, if  
so he might be without fault ; and therefore  
thus replied : “ Ready am I to work out thy  
obedience, if thou promise me to do whatsoever  
I shall bid thee ” ; and Saint Francis promising,  
Brother Bernard said : “ Now tell me, father,  
what is thy will that I should do.” Then  
spake Saint Francis : “ I command thee by  
holy obedience, that for punishment of my  
presumption and the heat within my heart,  
when now I throw me on the ground upon  
my back, thou set one foot upon my throat,  
and the other on my mouth, and thuswise three

St times pass over me from side to side, crying  
I Saint Francis' shame upon me and contempt, and chief of all  
penance bespeak me thus: 'Clodpoll, lie there, thou  
spawn of Peter Bernardoni, whence cometh such  
great pride to thee, that art a thing most vile?'"  
Hearing the which Brother Bernard, albeit right  
grievous to him was it in the doing, yet for holy  
obedience, with what courtesy as best he might,  
he fulfilled the bidding of Saint Francis; and  
this done, Saint Francis said: "Now do thou  
command me whate'er thou wilt that I should  
do; since I have promised thee obedience."  
Said Brother Bernard: "I command thee by  
holy obedience that, whensoe'er we be together,  
thou rebuke and correct me harshly for my  
faults." Whereat Saint Francis made mighty  
marvel: for that Brother Bernard was of such  
great sanctity that he held him in high reverence,  
and deemed him not blameworthy in any thing  
at all, and therefore from that time forth Saint  
Francis took heed to shun his fellowship, by  
reason of the said obedience, so that no word  
of correction might ever fall on one whom he  
knew to be of such great holiness, but when he  
wished to see him or hear him speak of God,  
with what speed he might he left him again and  
was away. Right edifying in very sooth it was  
to see with what great love and reverence and  
humbleness Saint Francis, the father, bore him  
and spake with Brother Bernard, his first-born  
son. To the laud and glory of Jesu Christ and  
the poor little one, Saint Francis. Amen.

## Chapter IV

*How the angel of God proposed a question unto Brother Elias, guardian of a House in the valley of Spoleto, and because Brother Elias answered him proudly, departed and went along the road to Saint James's, where he found Brother Bernard and told him this story*

AT the beginning and commencement of the St Francis Order, when as yet there were few brothers and the Houses had not been taken into possession, Saint Francis for his devotion went to Saint James's of Galicia, and took with him certain of the brothers, among whom one was Brother Bernard; and as they went thus together on the way, he found in a certain place a poor sick man, and having compassion upon him, said to Brother Bernard: "Little brother, I will that thou stay here to tend on this sick man"; and Brother Bernard humbly bowing the knee and bending the head received the obedience of the holy father, and stayed in that place; and Saint Francis with the other companions went on to Saint James's. Having won thither, while he was spending the night in prayer in the church of St James, it was revealed by God unto Saint Francis, that it behoved him to take possession of many places throughout the world, because his Order must needs grow and increase into a vast multitude of brothers: so upon this revelation, Saint Francis began to take possession of places in all those countries. And when Saint Francis was returning by the same

cis goes  
to Galicia

The angel way, he found Brother Bernard and the sick at the man, with whom he had left him, fully restored <sup>door</sup> to health; wherefore Saint Francis the next year gave leave unto Brother Bernard to go to Saint James's. So Saint Francis returned to the valley of Spoleto and abode in a solitary place, he and Brother Masseo and Brother Elias and others; and they all took right good heed not to let or hinder Saint Francis from prayer; and this did they for the great reverence that they bore him, and because they knew that God revealed unto him wondrous high matters in his prayers. Now it befell on a day that, Saint Francis being in prayer in a wood, a fair youth, arrayed for a journey, came to the door of the House, and knocked with such haste and violence and for so long a space that the brothers greatly marvelled at such unwonted knocking. Went Brother Masseo, and oped the door, and said to the youth: "Whence art thou come, my little son, for in very sooth it seems that thou wast never here before, in such unwonted fashion hast thou knocked?" The youth replied: "And how then should one knock?" Quoth Brother Masseo: "Give three knocks, one a brief space after the other; then wait so long that the brother may have said the Paternoster and come unto thee; and if in this space he does not come, knock once again." The youth replied: "I am in great haste and therefore I knock so loudly because I have a long journey to make, and am come here to speak with Brother Francis; but he is now

wrapt in contemplation in the wood, wherefore Brother I wish not to disturb him ; but go, tell Brother Elias very Elias that I would fain ask him a question, for wroth I hear that he is very wise." Then went Brother Masseo and told Brother Elias that he should go to the youth : but he waxed wroth thereat and would not go. Wherefore Brother Masseo knew not what to do nor what to answer him ; in that if he said, Brother Elias cannot come, it were a lie ; and should he tell how he was wroth and would not come, he feared to set before him an evil example. When Brother Masseo was so long delaying to return, the young man knocked again as at the first, and a short while after Brother Masseo returned to the door and said unto the youth : "Thou hast taken no heed unto my instruction in the matter of knocking." Replied the youth : "Brother Elias will not come unto me : but go thou and tell Brother Francis that I am come to speak with him ; but since I would fain not hinder him from prayer, tell him to send unto me Brother Elias." Then Brother Masseo got him to Saint Francis, who was praying in the wood with his face uplifted towards heaven, and set forth to him the message of the youth and the answer of Brother Elias : now that youth was an angel of God in the form of a man. Therewith Saint Francis, nor moving from his place nor bending down his head, spake to Brother Masseo : "Go thou and tell Brother Elias for obedience sake to go forthwith unto this youth." Brother Elias receiving the obedience of Saint Francis, went to the door

and will much disquieted, and opened it with great noise  
not and violence, and said to the youth : "What is  
answer thy will?" Replied the youth : "Take heed,  
the angel brother, that thou be not disquieted, as thou dost  
seem to be ; for anger weigheth down the soul  
and suffereth it not to see the truth." Said  
Brother Elias : "Tell me what thing thou wilt  
of me." Replied the youth : "I ask thee if  
it be lawful for the followers of the Holy  
Gospel to eat that which is set before them  
even as Christ bade his disciples ; and I ask thee  
moreover if it be lawful for any man to put for-  
ward aught contrary to the liberty of the Gospel."  
Brother Elias made answer haughtily : "I know  
full well, but will not answer thee, so go thy  
ways." Quoth the youth : "I should know  
better to answer this question than canst thou."  
Then in a fury and great rage Brother Elias  
shut to the door and was away. Anon began  
he to muse upon the question aforesaid and  
doubt within himself, and knew not how to  
resolve it ; for he was vicar of the Order and  
had commanded and made an ordinance out and  
beyond the Gospel and beyond the Rule of Saint  
Francis, to wit, that no brother in the Order  
should eat flesh ; so that the said question was  
expressly aimed at him. Wherefore, not know-  
ing how to clear himself, and thinking on the  
modesty of the youth, and how he had said that  
he should know better how to answer that ques-  
tion than could he, Brother Elias went back  
again to the door and opened it for to ask the  
youth touching the question aforesaid ; but he

was already away, in that the pride of Brother Theangel Elias was not worthy to hold converse with the appearsto angel. This done, Saint Francis, to whom the whole had been revealed by God, came back from out the wood, and sharply with loud voice rebuked Brother Elias saying: "You do ill, proud Brother Elias, to drive away the holy angels that come to teach us. I tell thee that much I fear lest thy pride will make thee end thy days outside the Order." On that same day, in the very hour that the angel went away, appeared he in the self-same form to Brother Bernard, who was on his way back from Saint James's, and had won the bank of a great river; and saluted him in his own tongue, saying: "God give thee peace, good brother"; and good Brother Bernard marvelled exceedingly, and noting the beauty of the youth and the language of his native land, together with his salutation of peace and his joyful countenance, he asked: "Whence art thou come, good youth?" Replied the angel: "I come from the place where Saint Francis dwells, and went there to have speech with him; and this I could not attain, for that he was in the wood contemplating things divine, and I wished not to disturb him. And in that place dwell Brother Masseo and Brother Giles and Brother Elias; and Brother Masseo taught me to knock at the door as the brothers use; but Brother Elias, because he would not answer the question that I set him, afterwards repented thereof, and would fain have heard me and seen me, but he

and sets could not." After these words, said the angel him to Brother Bernard: "Wherefore dost thou across not cross over?" Brother Bernard made the river answer: "Because I fear the danger for the depth of the waters that I see." Quoth the angel: "Let us cross over together, and be not doubting"; and he took his hand and in the twinkling of an eye set him on the other side of the stream. Then Brother Bernard knew that he was the angel of God, and with great reverence and joy cried in a loud voice: "O blessed angel of God, tell me thy name." Replied the angel: "Wherefore askest thou my name, the which is Wonderful?" And this said, the angel vanished out of sight and left Brother Bernard much comforted, in such sort that all that way he journeyed with great joy; and bethought him of the day and hour that the angel had appeared to him. And coming to the place where Saint Francis was with the companions aforesaid, he set forth unto them the whole matter in order; and they knew of a surety that the selfsame angel on that day and on that hour had appeared unto them and unto him.

### Chapter V

*How the holy Brother Bernard of Assisi was sent by Saint Francis to Bologna and there founded a House*

**S**EEING that Saint Francis and his companions were called of God and elect to bear in their hearts and in their deeds and preach

with their tongues the cross of Christ, they seemed to be and were in very sooth men crucified, so by reason of their habit as of their austere life and deeds and works: and therefore they desired the more to suffer shame and contumely for the love of Christ, rather than honour of the world and reverence and praise of men: in insults they rejoiced and at honours they grew sad: and so they passed through the world as strangers and pilgrims, bearing with them naught save Jesu Christ Crucified. And sith they were true branches of the true vine, that is Christ, they brought forth great and good fruit of souls, that they won for God. It happened in the beginning of the Order that Saint Francis sent Brother Bernard to Bologna to the end that he might there, according to the grace that God had given him, bring forth fruit to God; and Brother Bernard making the sign of the most holy cross, for holy obedience departed and came unto Bologna. And the children seeing him in poor and threadbare habit, despitefully intreated and made much mock of him, as though he were a fool: but Brother Bernard with patience and with joy bore all things for the love of Christ; nay, of set purpose that he might the more be evilly intreated, betook him to the market-place of the city: whereby, he sitting there, many children and men came together about him, and some from behind, and others before, plucked at his hood; some pelted him with dust and some with stones; some pushed him this way and others that: and

Bernard  
sent to  
Bologna

He Brother Bernard continuing always after the suffers same fashion and with the same patience, with great a joyful countenance, neither complained nor insults changed at all, and for the space of many days returned to the same place, but for to suffer the like usage. And sith patience is a work of perfection and proof of virtue, a learned doctor of the law, beholding and musing on the great constancy and virtue of Brother Bernard, how for so many days nor taunt nor contumely could e'er disquiet him, said thus within himself:

"Of a surety this needs must be a holy man"; and coming near unto him, he asked: "Who art thou? and wherefore art thou come hither?" And Brother Bernard for reply put his hand into his bosom and drew forth the Rule of Saint Francis, and gave it him that he might read, and when he had read it, musing on its most lofty state of perfection, with exceeding great marvel and amazement he turned him unto his companions and said: "Of a truth this is the highest state of religion whereof I have ever heard: wherefore this man and his companions are the holiest men in this world, and whoso does him wrong committeth a most grievous sin; most highly should we honour him, seeing that he is a true friend of God." And he said to Brother Bernard: "If 'tis your wish to found a House, wherein you may serve God conveniently, with right good will, for the salvation of my soul, will I give it you." Replied Brother Bernard: "Good sir, methinks our Lord Jesu Christ hath

put this thought within your heart; and therefore but for the honour of Christ I willingly accept your proffered gift." Then with great joy and love the said judge took Brother Bernard to his house; and gave him anon the promised House and made it all ready and at his own charges furnished it: and from that time forth became the father and special defender of Brother Bernard and his companions. And Brother Bernard, through his holy life, began to be much honoured of the people, in such sort that whoso might touch and see him, deemed himself blessed thereby; but he like a true disciple of Christ and the humble Francis, fearing that the honour of the world might hinder the peace and salvation of his soul, on a day departed and returned unto Saint Francis and spake thus unto him: "Father, the House is founded in the city of Bologna: send brothers thither to maintain it and abide therein: since I have no more profit therein, nay, rather for the too great honour done to me I fear me I have lost e'en more than I have gained." Thereat Saint Francis, learning all things in order, how God had worked through Brother Bernard, gave thanks to God, who thuswise was beginning to enlarge the poor little disciples of the Cross: and anon he sent of his companions to Bologna and the parts of Lombardy, the which founded many Houses in diverse places.

## Chapter VI

*How Saint Francis blessed the holy Brother Bernard and left him as his vicar, when he came to pass away from this life*

St BROTHER BERNARD was of such sanctity that Saint Francis held him in high reverence, and praised him oftentimes. It happened on a day while Saint Francis was continuing devoutly in prayer, that it was revealed to him by God that Brother Bernard under leave of God must needs endure full many and sharp assaults of the demons: wherefore Saint Francis having great compassion on the said Brother Bernard, whom he loved as his own dear son, prayed many days with tears, beseeching God for him and committing him unto Jesu Christ, that he might give him the victory over the demon. And Saint Francis thus devoutly praying, on a day God answered him: "Francis, fear not; for all the temptations wherewith Brother Bernard must needs be assailed, are permitted him of God, for the exercise of virtue and a crown of merit; and in the end will he have the victory over all his enemies, for that he is one of the great ones of the kingdom of heaven." At the which reply Saint Francis was exceeding glad and gave thanks unto God: and from that hour forth he ever bore him greater love and reverence. And this was shown forth not only in his life, but also at his death. For Saint Francis coming

prays for  
Bernard

near unto death and having, like the holy In dying patriarch Jacob, his devoted sons standing <sup>blesses</sup> round about him sorrowing and weeping at the <sup>him</sup> the departure of so lovable a father, asked : "Where is my first-born ? Come to me, my little son, that my soul may bless thee before I die." Then Brother Bernard spake secretly unto Brother Elias, who was vicar of the Order : "Go, father, to the right hand of the saint, that he may bless thee." And Brother Elias setting himself at his right hand, Saint Francis, who had lost his sight by reason of his too much weeping, laid his right hand on the head of Brother Elias, and said : "This is not the head of my first-born Brother Bernard." Then Brother Bernard went to him on his left hand, and Saint Francis then put his arms in the shape of a cross and laid the right hand on the head of Brother Bernard and the left on the head of the said Brother Elias, and spake thus unto Brother Bernard : "May God the Father of our Lord Jesu Christ bless thee with all spiritual and celestial blessings in Christ. Since thou art the first-born, elect in this holy Order to give an ensample of the gospel life, to follow Christ in gospel poverty ; for not only didst thou give and distribute to the poor whate'er was thine wholly and freely for the love of Christ, but offered thyself also unto God in this Order for a sacrifice of sweetness ; blessed be thou therefore of our Lord Jesu Christ and of me his poor little servant, with everlasting benediction, going and staying, wak-

and ing and sleeping, living and dying; let whoso elects him blesseth thee be filled with blessings, whoso his vicar curseth thee go not free from punishment. Be thou the chief among thy brethren, and to thy command let all the brothers yield obedience: have thou license to receive into this Order whomsoe'er thou wilt, and let no brother have lordship over thee, and be thou free to go and stay where'er it pleaseth thee." And after the death of Saint Francis, the brothers loved and honoured Brother Bernard as a father worthy of all reverence, and when he drew nigh unto death there came to him many brothers from diverse parts of the world, among whom came that seraphic and godlike Brother Giles; who, looking on Brother Bernard, said with joyfulness: "Sursum corda, Brother Bernard, sursum corda": and Brother Bernard spake secretly unto a brother that he should make ready for Brother Giles a place well fitted for contemplation: and so was it done. Being at the last hour of death, Brother Bernard let lift him up, and spake unto the brothers that were before him, saying: "O brothers most dear, I desire not to speak to you many words: but ye should bear in mind that the life of Religion that I have had, ye have still now, and this that now I have, ye too shall have, and this I find within my soul, that for a thousand worlds the like of this I would not have served any other Lord than our Lord Jesu Christ: and for every fault I have committed I do accuse myself and confess my guilt unto my Saviour Jesu and to you. I pray

you, my brothers most dear, that ye love one Bernard another"; and after these words and other good passes admonishments, he laid him down upon his bed, and his face grew bright and joyful beyond measure, so that all the brothers marvelled exceedingly, and in that joyfulness his most holy soul, crowned with glory, passed from this present life into the blessed life of the angels.

### Chapter VII

*How Saint Francis passed a Lent in an island in the lake of Perugia, where he fasted forty days and forty nights, and ate no more than one half loaf*

AS the true servant of Christ, Saint Francis, was in certain points as it were another Christ, given to the world for the salvation of men, it was the will of God the Father to make him in many of his acts conformed and like unto His own dear son Jesu Christ; even as was shown forth in the venerable company of the twelve companions, and in the wondrous mystery of the holy stigmata, and in the unbroken fast during the sacred Lent, which he kept in this manner. It befell on a time that Saint Francis, on the day of carnival, being hard by the lake of Perugia in the house of one of his devoted followers, with the which he had lodged the night, was inspired of God that he should go and keep that Lent on an island in the lake; wherefore Saint Francis besought this devoted follower of his, that, for the love of Christ, he

St Fran- would carry him across in his little boat to an  
cis goes island on the lake, wherein no man dwelt, and  
to an that so would he do upon the night of Ash  
island Wednesday, so that none might be ware of it ;  
so he for love of the great devotion that he had  
unto Saint Francis with diligence fulfilled his  
request and carried him across to the island  
aforesaid, and Saint Francis took with him  
naught save two small loaves. And being come  
unto the island, and his friend parting himself to  
go back home, Saint Francis besought him  
tenderly that to no man would he reveal in what  
guise he there abode, and that save upon Holy  
Thursday he would not come to him ; and so  
he was away. And Saint Francis remained  
alone : and sith there was no dwelling-place  
whereto he might betake him, he entered into a  
close thicket which many a thorny bush and  
shrub had fashioned like a cave or little hut :  
and in this place he gave himself up to prayer  
and contemplation of the things of heaven. And  
there abode he all the Lent, nor eating nor  
drinking aught save half of one of those small  
loaves, even as was found by his devoted  
follower on Holy Thursday, what time that  
he came back to him ; who found of the two  
loaves one still entire, but of the other, half.  
So men believe that Saint Francis took no  
food from reverence for the fast of Christ the  
blessed one, who fasted forty days and forty  
nights without partaking any earthly food ; but  
in this manner with that half a loaf chased  
far the venom of vain glory from him, and after

the pattern of Christ kept fast for forty days He fasts and forty nights ; and thereafter in that place where Saint Francis had wrought such wondrous abstinence, through his merits did God work many miracles ; for the which cause did men begin to build houses there and dwell therein ; and in brief space uprose a hamlet fair and great and therewithal a House for the brothers, the which is named the House of the Island ; and even to this day the men and women of that hamlet have great reverence and devotion for the place where Saint Francis kept the aforesaid Lent.

### Chapter VIII

*How, as Saint Francis and Brother Leo were going by the way, he set forth unto him what things were perfect joy*

WHENAS Saint Francis was going one day from Perugia to Saint Mary of the Angels with Brother Leo in the spring tide, and the very bitter cold grievously tormented him, he called to Brother Leo that was going on before and said thus : " Brother Leo, though the Brothers Minor throughout all the world were great ensamples of sanctity and true edifying, nathless write it down and take heed diligently that not therein is perfect joy." And going on a little further, Saint Francis called a second time : " O Brother Leo, albeit the Brothers Minor should give sight to the blind, make straight the crooked, cast out devils, make the deaf to hear, the lame to walk,

What the dumb to speak, and (greater still) should things raise them that have been dead a four days' perfect space, write that not herein is perfect joy."

joy And going on a little, he cried aloud: "O

Brother Leo, if the Brother Minor should know all tongues and all sciences and all the Scriptures, so that he could prophesy and reveal not only things to come but also the secrets of consciences and souls, write that not therein is perfect joy." Going on yet a little further, Saint Francis called aloud once more: "O Brother Leo, thou little sheep of God, albeit the Brother Minor should speak with the tongue of angels, and know the courses of the stars and the virtues of herbs; and though all the treasures of the earth were revealed unto him and he understood the virtues of birds, and of fishes, and of all animals, and of men, and of trees, and of stones, and of roots, and of waters, write that not therein is perfect joy."

And going on a little further, Saint Francis cried aloud: "O Brother Leo, albeit the Brother Minor could preach so well as to turn all the infidels to the faith of Christ, write that not therein is perfect joy." And this manner of speech continuing for full two miles, Brother Leo with much marvel besought him, saying: "Father, I pray thee in the name of God that thou tell me, wherein is perfect joy." And Saint Francis thus made answer: "When we come to Saint Mary of the Angels, all soaked as we are with rain and numbed with cold and besmirched with mud and tormented with

hunger, and knock at the door ; and the porter What comes in anger and says : ' Who are ye ? ' and things we say : ' We be two of your brethren ' ; and <sup>are perfect joy</sup> he says, ' Ye be no true men ; nay, ye be two rogues that gad about deceiving the world and robbing the alms of the poor ; get ye gone ' : and thereat he shuts to the door and makes us stand without in the snow and the rain, cold and a-hungered, till night-fall ; if therewithal we patiently endure such wrong and such cruelty and such rebuffs without being disquieted and without murmuring against him ; and with humbleness and charity bethink us that this porter knows us full well and that God makes him to speak against us ; O Brother Leo, write that herein is perfect joy. And if we be instant in knocking and he come out full of wrath and drive us away as importunate knaves, with insults and buffetings, saying : ' Get ye gone hence, vilest of thieves, begone to the alms-house, for here ye shall find nor food nor lodging ' ; if we suffer this with patience and with gladness and with love, O Brother Leo, write that herein is perfect joy. And if we still constrained by hunger, cold and night, knock yet again and shout and with much weeping pray him for the love of God that he will but open and let us in ; and he yet more enraged should say : ' These be importunate knaves, I will pay them well as they deserve,' and should rush out with a knotty stick and taking us by the hood, throw us upon the ground and send us rolling in the snow and beat us with all the knots of that stick : if

St Fran- with patience and with gladness we suffer all  
 cis and these things, thinking on the pains of the  
 Brother blessed Christ, the which we ought to suffer  
 Leo for the love of Him: O Brother Leo, write  
 that here and herein is perfect joy: then hear  
 the conclusion of the whole matter, Brother  
 Leo: Above all graces and gifts of the Holy  
 Spirit, that Christ granteth to His beloved,  
 is to overcome oneself, and willingly for the  
 love of Christ endure pains and insults and  
 shame and want: inasmuch as in all other  
 gifts of God we may not glory, sith they are  
 not ours but God's; whence saith the Apostle:  
 What hast thou that thou hast not received  
 of God? And if thou hast received it of  
 Him, wherefore boastest thou thyself as if  
 thou hadst it of thyself? But in the cross of  
 tribulation and affliction we may boast, sith  
 this is ours; and therefore saith the Apostle,  
 I would not that I should glory save in the  
 cross of our Lord Jesu Christ.

### Chapter IX

*How Saint Francis taught Brother Leo how to  
 answer him; and how he could never say  
 aught save the contrary of what Saint  
 Francis wished*

IT befell on a time in the beginning of the Order  
 that Saint Francis was with Brother Leo in  
 a place where they had not books to say the  
 divine office withal; when the hour of matins  
 came, said Saint Francis to Brother Leo: "Dear

son, we have no breviary wherewith to say Leo's matins; but to the end that we may spend the time in praising God, I will speak and thou shalt answer as I shall teach thee: and take good heed that thou change not the words to other than I shall teach thee. I shall say thus: O Brother Francis, so many sins and evils hast thou done in the world that thou art deserving of hell; and thou, Brother Leo, shalt answer: Sooth is it thou meritest the lowest depth of hell." And Brother Leo with dove-like simplicity replied: "Right willingly, father; begin, in the name of God." Then began Saint Francis to say: "So many sins and evils hast thou done in the world that thou art deserving of hell." And Brother Leo made answer: "God will work through thee so much of good that thou wilt go to paradise." Quoth Saint Francis: "Nay, say not so, Brother Leo; but when I shall say: Brother Francis, so many iniquities hast thou done against God that thou art worthy to be accursed of God, do thou answer thus: In very sooth art thou worthy to be set among the accursed ones." And Brother Leo replied: "Right willingly, father." Therewith Saint Francis with many tears and sighs and beating of the breast cried with a loud voice: "O my Lord of heaven and earth, I have done against thee so many iniquities and so many sins that I am altogether worthy to be accursed of Thee"; and Brother Leo made answer: "O Brother Francis, God will do so unto thee that among

St the blessed shalt thou above all be blessed.”  
Francis And Brother Francis marvelling that Brother  
reproves Leo answered to the contrary of what he had  
him laid upon him, reproved him saying: “Where-  
fore dost thou not answer even as I teach? I  
command thee by holy obedience that thou  
answer as I shall teach thee. I shall say thus:  
“O Brother Francis, vile wretch, thinkest thou  
that God will have mercy on thee, seeing thou  
hast committed so many sins against the Father of  
mercy and God of all consolation, that thou art  
not worthy to find mercy? And thou Brother  
Leo, little lamb, wilt answer: In no wise art  
thou worthy to find mercy.” But whenas  
Saint Francis said: “O Brother Francis, vile  
wretch” and the like, Brother Leo made  
answer: “God the Father, whose mercy is  
infinitely greater than thy sin, will show thee  
great mercy, and, more than this, will pour  
upon thee many graces.” At this reply Saint  
Francis being sweetly angered and patiently dis-  
quieted, said unto Brother Leo: “And where-  
fore hast thou had the boldness to do against  
obedience, and now so many times hast answered  
to the contrary of that which I laid upon  
thee?” Replied Brother Leo right humbly  
and reverently: “God knows, my father, that  
each time I set it in my heart to answer as  
thou hadst bid me; but God makes me speak  
as it pleaseth Him and not as it pleaseth me.”  
Wherat Saint Francis marvelled, and said to  
Brother Leo: “I pray thee most lovingly that  
this time thou answer me as I have told thee.”

Replied Brother Leo : " Speak in the name of St God, for of a surety will I this time answer as Francis' thou wishest." And Saint Francis weeping said : " O Brother Francis, vile wretch, thinkest thou that God will have mercy upon thee ? " Replied Brother Leo : " Nay rather, great grace shalt thou receive of God and He shall exalt thee and glorify thee for ever, for every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and naught other can I say since God speaketh through my mouth." And thuswise in this humble strife, with many tears and much spiritual consolation, they kept watch until the day.

### Chapter X

*How Brother Masseo, as though mocking, said unto Saint Francis that all the world came after him : and he replied that this was for the confusion of the world and the grace of God*

WHENAS Saint Francis on a time abode in the House of Portiuncula with Brother Masseo of Marignano, a man of much sanctity, discretion and grace in speaking of God, for the which cause Saint Francis loved him much : one day Saint Francis returning from the wood and from his prayers, and being at the entrance to the wood, the said Brother Masseo desired to make proof of his humility, and stood over against him, and as though mocking said : " Why after thee ? why after thee ? why after thee ? " Replied Saint Francis : " What is

St Fran- this thou wouldest say?" Quoth Brother  
cis and Masseo: "I say, why doth all the world come  
Masseo after thee, and why is it seen that all men long  
to see thee, and hear thee, and obey thee?  
Thou art not a man comely of form, thou art  
not of much wisdom, thou art not noble of  
birth: whence comes it then that it is after thee  
that the whole world doth run?" Hearing  
this Saint Francis, all overjoyed in spirit, lifting  
up his face unto heaven, stood for a great while  
with his mind uplifted in God; anon returning  
to himself again, he knelt him down and  
rendered thanks and praises unto God: and  
then with great fervour of spirit turned him to  
Brother Masseo and said: "Wilt thou know  
why after me? wilt thou know why after me?  
wilt thou know why after me? that the whole  
world doth run? This cometh unto me from  
the eyes of the most high God, which behold  
at all time the evil and the good: for those  
most holy eyes have seen among sinners none  
more vile, none more lacking, no greater sinner  
than am I: wherefore to do this marvellous  
work the which He purposeth to do, He hath  
not found upon the earth a creature more vile,  
and therefore hath He chosen me to confound  
the nobleness and the greatness and the strength  
and the beauty and wisdom of the world: to  
the intent that men may know that all virtue  
and all goodness come from Him, and not from  
the creature, and that no man may glory in  
himself; but whoso will glory, may glory in the  
Lord, unto whom is honour and glory for ever

and ever." Then Brother Masseo, at so humble They  
a reply uttered with so great fervour, was afraid, come to  
and knew of a surety that Saint Francis was three  
rooted and grounded in humility. roads

## Chapter XI

*How Saint Francis made Brother Masseo turn  
round and round several times, and then went  
to Sienna*

IT befell on a day when Saint Francis was going by the way with Brother Masseo, that the said Brother Masseo was going on a little before; and coming to a place where three roads met whereby one might go to Florence, to Sienna, or to Arezzo, quoth Brother Masseo : "Father, by which way are we to go?" Replied Saint Francis : "By that which God shall will." Quoth Brother Masseo : "And how can we know the will of God?" Replied Saint Francis : "By the sign which I shall show thee; wherefore by the merit of holy obedience I command thee that in the cross-way where thou art standing now, thou turn round and round as little children do, and cease not turning unless I tell thee." Then Brother Masseo began to turn him round and round, and turned round so long that oftentimes he fell upon the ground through giddiness of the head, the which is wont to be engendered through such manner of turning; but sith Saint Francis did not bid him stop, he forthwith got up again, desiring faithfully to yield obedience. At length, while he was

S The turning round right manfully, Saint Francis said: choice of "Stand firm and do not move"; and so he **ways** stood, and Saint Francis asked him: "Towards what quarter is thy face now turned?" Replied Brother Masseo: "Towards Sienna." Quoth Saint Francis: "That is the way that God would have us go." Now as they went along this way, Brother Masseo marvelled within himself, wherefore Saint Francis had made him do as do the children, before the worldly folk that passed that way: howbeit for reverence sake he dared say naught to the holy father. As they drew nigh unto Sienna, the people of the city heard of the coming of the saint and hied them out to meet him; and of their devotion bore him and his companion right to the bishop's house, in such wise that they touched not the ground at all with their feet. Now at that same hour certain folk of Sienna were at strife with one another, and already two of them lay dead. Saint Francis having won there preached to them in so devout and saintly a fashion, that he brought them one and all to peace and close unity and concord together. For the which cause the bishop of Sienna, hearing of the holy work that Saint Francis had wrought, bade him to his house and received him with high honour that day, and eke the night. And the next morn Saint Francis, who with true humility sought naught in all his works save only the glory of God, rose up betimes with his companion, and without the bishop's knowledge was away. Whereat the said Brother Masseo went

by the way murmuring within himself, saying : Brother  
“What is this that this good man hath done ?  
Me he made to turn round and round like a  
little child, and to the bishop who hath done  
him such honour, he hath said not even a word,  
nor given him thanks withal” ; and to Brother  
Masseo it seemed that Saint Francis had borne  
himself therein without discretion. But anon  
by divine inspiration coming to himself again,  
and chiding himself within his heart, Brother  
Masseo said : “Thou art too proud, who dost  
judge the works of God, and art worthy of hell  
for thy undiscerning pride ; for yesterday did  
Brother Francis work such mighty works that,  
if the Angel of God had wrought them, they  
had not been more marvellous : wherefore, if he  
had bidden thee throw stones, thou shouldst  
have done it and obeyed : for what he did upon  
the way proceeded forth of God’s own working,  
as was set forth by the good ending that followed  
thereon ; for had he not made peace between  
those that were at strife with each other, not  
only many bodies would have been stabbed to  
death, as had indeed begun to be, but many souls  
also the devil would have dragged to hell :  
wherefore most foolish art thou and proud that  
murmurest at that which manifestly cometh forth  
from out the will of God.” And all these  
things that Brother Masseo spake within his  
heart, going on in front, were revealed of God  
unto Saint Francis. Wherefore Saint Francis,  
coming close up to him, spake thus : “Hold fast  
the things that now are in thy thoughts, for they

Masseo’s  
doubts

S **Masseo** are good and useful and inspired of God ; but thy first murmuring was blind and vain and proud, and by the devil set within thy mind." Thereby did Brother Masseo clearly see that Saint Francis knew the secrets of his heart, and for a surety understand that the spirit of divine wisdom did guide the holy father in all his acts.

## Chapter XII

*How Saint Francis laid on Brother Masseo the office of the door, of alms-giving, and of the kitchen : then at the prayers of the brothers set him free of them*

**S**AINT FRANCIS, desiring to humble Brother Masseo, to the end that he might not be lifted up to vain glory by the many gifts and graces that God gave him, but by virtue of humility might grow therewith from virtue unto virtue, on a time when he abode in a solitary place with those true saints, his first companions, (among the which was the said Brother Masseo), spake on a day to Brother Masseo, before all his companions : "O Brother Masseo, all these thy companions have the grace of contemplation and of prayer ; but thou hast the grace of preaching the word of God, for the satisfying of the people : wherefore to the end that these may be able to give themselves up to contemplation, I will that thou perform the office of the door and of alms-giving and of the kitchen ; and when the other brothers eat, thou shalt eat without the door of the House ; so that whosoever shall come to the

house, thou mayst satisfy them, ere they knock, The with some good words of God; so that then <sup>sermon</sup> none other need go out save thee; and this do <sup>on humil-</sup>  
<sup>ity</sup> for the merit of holy obedience." Therewith Brother Masseo drew back his hood and bent his head, and humbly received that obedience, and continued therein for many days performing the office of the door and of alms-giving and of the kitchen. Whereat his companions, as men enlightened of God, began to feel in their hearts great remorse, considering that Brother Masseo was a man of great perfection, even as they and more so, and that on him was laid all the burden of the House and not on them. For the which cause they all were moved with one desire, and gat them to the holy father and besought him that it would please him to distribute among them those offices, sith their consciences could in no wise endure that Brother Masseo should bear the burden of such toil. Hearing this, Saint Francis yielded him unto their counsels, and granted their desire; and calling Brother Masseo, said unto him: "Brother Masseo, thy companions desire to have share in the offices that I have given thee, and therefore I will that the said offices be divided." Quoth Brother Masseo with great humility and patience: "Father, whate'er thou dost lay on me, or wholly, or in part, I deem it altogether done of God." Then Saint Francis, beholding their loving kindness and the humility of Brother Masseo, preached unto them a marvellous sermon on holy humility; setting forth unto them that the greater the gifts and graces that

**S**t Fran- God giveth us, the more humble should we be,  
 cis and sith without humility no virtue is acceptable to  
 Masseo God. And done the preaching, he distributed  
 go towards the offices with love exceeding great.  
 France

### Chapter XIII

*How Saint Francis and Brother Masseo set the bread that they had begged upon a stone hard by a fountain, and how Saint Francis praised poverty exceedingly. Then besought God and Saint Peter and Saint Paul that He would set in his heart the love of holy poverty, and how Saint Peter and Saint Paul appeared unto him*

**T**HE wonderful servant and follower of Christ, to wit Saint Francis, to the end that he might in all things conform himself perfectly unto Christ, who, as the Gospel saith, sent his disciples forth by two and two unto all the cities and places where He was himself purposing to go; seeing that after the pattern of Christ he had gathered together twelve companions, sent them forth by two and two to preach throughout the world. And to give them an ensample of true obedience, he was himself the first to go, after the pattern of Christ who began to do before he taught. Wherefore having allotted to his companions the other parts of the world, he with Brother Masseo as his companion took the road that led to the land of France. And coming one day to a town sore hungered, they went, according to the rule, begging their bread for the love of God; and Saint Francis went by one

street, and Brother Masseo by another. But The because Saint Francis was mean to look upon treasure and small of stature, and was deemed thereby a <sup>of poverty</sup> vile beggar by whoso knew him not, he got by his begging naught save a few mouthfuls and scraps of dry bread: but to Brother Masseo, in that he was tall and fair of form, were given good pieces, large and in plenty, and of fresh bread. When that they had done their begging, they met together to eat in a place without the city, where was a fair fountain and, hard by, a fine, broad stone; upon the which each set the alms that he had begged. And Saint Francis, seeing that Brother Masseo's pieces of bread were more and finer and larger than his own, rejoiced with great joy, and said: "O Brother Masseo, we are not worthy of such vast treasure": and when he repeated many times these self-same words, Brother Masseo made answer: "Father, how can one speak of treasure where is such poverty and lack of all things whereof there is need? Here is nor cloth, nor knife, nor plate, nor porringer, nor house, nor table, nor man-servant, nor maid-servant." Quoth Saint Francis: "And this it is that I account vast treasure, wherein is no thing at all prepared by human hands, but whatsoe'er we have is given by God's own providence, as manifestly doth appear in the bread that we have begged, in the table of stone so fine, and in the fount so clear; wherefore I will that we pray unto God that He make us to love with all our heart the treasure of holy poverty which is so

The fer-noble, that thereunto did God Himself become a  
vour servitor." And when he had said these words,  
of St and they had done their prayer, and for refresh-  
Francis ment of the body had taken of those pieces and  
drunk of that water, they rose up to journey into  
France, and drawing nigh unto a church Saint  
Francis said to his companion : " Let us go into  
the church to pray." And Saint Francis gat  
him behind the altar and gave himself to prayer :  
and in that same prayer he received from the  
divine visitation fervour so exceeding great, the  
which inflamed his soul so mightily with the love  
of holy poverty that, by the colour of his face  
and the unwonted opening of his lips, it seemed  
as though he breathed forth flames of love. And  
coming thus enkindled to his companion, he  
bespake him thus : " Ah ! ah ! ah ! Brother  
Masseo, give thyself to me " ; and thus spake he  
three times ; and at the third time Saint Francis  
with his breath lifted Brother Masseo up into  
the air, and threw him a great spear's length in  
front of him ; whereby exceeding great amaze-  
ment took hold on Brother Masseo. After-  
wards he recounted to his companions how that,  
when as he was uplifted and hurled along by the  
breath that Saint Francis breathed on him, he  
tasted such sweetness in his soul, and consolation  
of the Holy Spirit, that in all his life he ne'er  
had felt the like. And this done, Saint Francis  
said : " My comrade, let us go to Saint Peter  
and Saint Paul and pray them to teach us and  
help us to possess the immeasurable treasure of  
most holy poverty ; for it is a treasure so high

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excelling and so divine that we be not worthy St Fran-  
 to lay it up in our vile vessels ; since this is that cis and  
 celestial virtue whereby all earthly things and Masseo  
 fleeting are trodden under foot, and whereby all come to  
 hindrances are lifted from the soul, so that freely Rome  
 she may join herself to God eternal. And this  
 is the virtue that makes the soul, still tied to  
 earth, hold converse with the angels in heaven,  
 and this it is that hung with Christ upon the  
 cross, with Christ was buried, with Christ rose  
 up again, with Christ ascended into heaven ; the  
 which also in this life grants to the souls that  
 love it an easier flight to heaven ; in that it  
 guards the arms of true humility and love.  
 Wherefore let us pray the most holy apostles of  
 Christ, the which were perfect lovers of this  
 gospel pearl, that they may beg for us this grace  
 from our Lord Jesu Christ, that of His most  
 holy mercy He may make us worthy to become  
 true lovers, followers, and humble disciples, of the  
 most precious, most lovable, and gospel poverty.”  
 With such converse they so fared until they  
 came unto Rome, and went into the church of  
 Saint Peter ; and Saint Francis set himself to  
 pray in one corner of the church, and Brother  
 Masseo in another ; and as he continued a long  
 time in prayer with much weeping and devotion,  
 there appeared unto Saint Francis the most holy  
 apostles Peter and Paul in great splendour, and  
 said : “ Because thou hast asked and desired to  
 observe that which Christ and His holy apostles  
 observed, the Lord Jesu Christ hath sent us  
 unto thee to announce that thy prayer is heard,

St Peter and that God has granted to thee and to thy  
 and followers in uttermost perfection the treasure of  
 St Paul most holy poverty. And further we tell thee  
 appear to St in His name that whoso after thy pattern shall  
 Francis perfectly follow this desire, he is assured of the  
 blessedness of life eternal : and blessed shalt thou  
 and all thy followers be” ; and with these words  
 they were away, leaving Saint Francis filled with  
 consolation. And rising from prayer, he returned  
 to his companion and asked him if God had  
 revealed naught unto him ; and he answered,  
 “Naught.” Then Saint Francis told him how the  
 holy apostles had appeared to him, and what they  
 had revealed. Whereat they both being filled  
 with joy resolved to return unto the valley of  
 Spoleto, and leave their journeying into France.

### Chapter XIV

*How, as Saint Francis and his brothers were  
 discoursing of God, He appeared in the midst  
 of them*

SAIN'T FRANCIS and his companions, in  
 the beginning of the Order, being gathered  
 together to speak of Christ, in fervour of spirit he  
 bade one of them open his mouth in the name  
 of God, and speak of God whate'er the Holy  
 Spirit might inspire in him. When the brother  
 had done his bidding and spoken marvellous  
 things of God, Saint Francis laid silence upon  
 him, and bade another brother do likewise. He  
 yielding obedience, and discoursing subtly of  
 God, Saint Francis in like manner laid silence

upon him, and bade a third discourse of God, Christ  
the which in like manner began to speak so appears  
deeply of the secret things of God, that Saint to the  
Francis knew of a surety that, even as the other Brothers  
twain, he spake by the Holy Spirit: and this  
likewise was set forth by example and a clear  
sign; for while they thus were speaking, there  
appeared the blessed Christ in the midst of them  
in form and fashion of a youth most fair, and  
blessed them all, and filled them with such grace  
and sweetness, that they all were rapt away out  
of themselves, and lay as though dead, taking no  
heed of aught of this world. Then returning  
to himself again, Saint Francis said unto them:  
“ My brothers most dear, give thanks to God,  
who hath willed, by the mouths of the simple,  
to reveal the treasures of heavenly wisdom;  
since God it is that openeth the mouth of the  
dumb, and maketh the tongues of the simple to  
speak words exceeding wise.”

### Chapter XV

*How Saint Clair ate with Saint Francis and the  
brothers, his companions, in St Mary of the Angels*

WHENAS Saint Francis was at Assisi,  
oftentimes he visited Saint Clare and gave  
her holy admonishments. And she having ex-  
ceeding great desire to once break bread with him,  
oft-times besought him thereto, but he was never  
willing to grant her this consolation; wherefore  
his companions, beholding the desire of Saint  
Clare, said unto Saint Francis: “ Father, it

St Francis doth appear to us that this severity accorded Francis and not with heavenly charity: since thou gives St Clare not ear unto Sister Clare, a virgin so saintly, so beloved of God, in so slight a matter as breaking bread with thee, and above all bearing in mind that she through thy preaching abandoned the riches and pomps of the world. And of truth, had she asked of thee a greater boon than this, thou oughtest so to do unto thy spiritual plant." Then replied Saint Francis: "Dost it seem good to you that I should grant her prayer?" Rejoined his companions: "Yea father, fitting is it that thou grant her this boon and consolation." Then spake Saint Francis: "Since it seems good to you, it seems so likewise unto me. But that she may be the more consoled, I will that this breaking of bread take place in Saint Mary of the Angels; for she has been so long shut up in St Damian that it will rejoice her to see again the house of Saint Mary where her hair was shorn away and she became the bride of Jesu Christ; and there let us eat together in the name of God." When came the day ordained by him, Saint Clare with one companion passed forth from out the convent, and with the companions of Saint Francis to bear her company came unto Saint Mary of the Angels, and devoutly saluted the Virgin Mary before her altar, where she had been shorn and veiled; so they conducted her to see the House, until such time as the hour for breaking bread was come. And in the meantime Saint Francis let make ready the table on the bare

ground, as he was wont to do. And the hour of breaking bread being come, they set themselves down together, Saint Francis and Saint Clare, and one of the companions of Saint Francis with the companion of Saint Clare, and all the other companions took each his place at the table with all humility. And at the first dish, Saint Francis began to speak of God so sweetly, so sublimely, and so wondrously, that the fulness of divine grace came down on them, and they all were rapt in God. And as they were thus rapt, with eyes and hands uplift to heaven, the folk of Assisi and Bettona and the country round about, saw that Saint Mary of the Angels, and all the House, and the wood that was just hard by the House, were burning brightly, and it seemed as it were a great fire that filled the church and the House and the whole wood together: for the which cause the folk of Assisi ran thither in great haste for to quench the flames, believing of a truth that the whole place was all on fire. But coming close up to the House and finding no fire at all, they entered within and found Saint Francis and Saint Clare and all their company in contemplation rapt in God and sitting around that humble board. Whereby of a truth they understood that this had been a heavenly flame and no earthly one at all, which God had let appear miraculously, for to show and signify the fire of love divine wherewith the souls of those holy brothers and holy nuns were all aflame; wherefore they gat them gone with great consolation

The  
Brothers  
and St  
Clare eat  
together

The flame in their hearts and with holy edifying. Then of divine love after some long space, Saint Francis and Saint Clare, together with all the others, returning to themselves again and feeling of good comfort from the spiritual food, took little heed of the food of the body. And, that blessed feast thus ended, Saint Clare, escorted well, returned unto Saint Damian, whereby the sisters, beholding her, had joy exceeding great; for they feared lest Saint Francis should have sent her to rule some other convent, even as he had already sent Sister Agnes, her holy sister, as abbess to rule the convent of Monticelli at Florence: and Saint Francis on a time had said to Saint Clare: "Be thou ready, if so be that I needs must send thee to some other House"; and she, as a daughter of holy obedience, had made answer: "Father, I am at all times ready to go whithersoever thou mayest send me." Wherefore the sisters rejoiced exceedingly when they saw her face again: and thenceforward Saint Clare abode in much consolation.

### Chapter XVI

*How Saint Francis received the counsel of Saint Clare and of the holy Brother Silvester, that it behoved him by preaching to convert much people; and how he founded the third Order, and preached unto the birds, and made the swallows hold their peace*

THE humble servant of Christ, Saint Francis, a short while after his conversion, having already gathered together many companions and

received them into the order, fell into deep thought and much doubting as to what he ought to do: whether to give himself wholly unto prayer, or some time also unto preaching: and on this matter he much desired to learn the will of God. And for that the holy humility that was in him suffered him not to trust over much in himself nor in his own prayers, he thought to search out the will of God through the prayers of others: wherefore he called Brother Masseo, and bespake him thus: "Go unto Sister Clare and tell her on my behalf, that she with certain of her most spiritual companions, should pray devoutly unto God, that it may please Him to show me which of the twain is the better: whether to give myself to preaching or wholly unto prayer. And then go unto Brother Silvester and tell the like to him." This was that Brother Silvester who when he was in the world had seen a cross of gold proceeding from the mouth of Saint Francis, the which reached even unto heaven and the arms thereof unto the ends of the world, and this Brother Silvester was of so great devotion and so great sanctity, that whatsoe'er he asked of God was granted him, and oftentimes he spake with God; wherefore Saint Francis had a great devotion unto him. So Brother Masseo departed, and according to the bidding of Saint Francis carried his message first unto Saint Clare and then unto Brother Silvester. Who, when he had heard thereof, forthwith fell on his knees in prayer, and as he prayed received answer from God, and turned to Brother Masseo,

He is and bespake him thus: "Thus saith the Lord: enjoined Say unto Brother Francis that God has not called to gain him to this estate for himself alone, but to the souls end that he may gain fruit of souls, and that many through him may be saved." With this reply Brother Masseo returned to Saint Clare to learn what she had received of God, and she answered that God had sent to her and her companions the same reply as He had given to Brother Silvester. Whereat Brother Masseo hied him back again to Saint Francis; and Saint Francis received him with exceeding great love, washing his feet and making ready for him the meal, and after he had eaten, Saint Francis called Brother Masseo into the wood; and there kneeled down before him and drew back his hood, stretching out his arms in the shape of a cross, and asked him: "What has my Lord Jesu Christ commanded that I should do?" Replied Brother Masseo: "As unto Brother Silvester, so likewise unto Sister Clare and her sisters, has Christ made answer and revealed: that it is His will that thou go throughout the world to preach, since He hath chosen thee not for thyself alone, but also for the salvation of others." And then Saint Francis, when he had heard this answer and known thereby the will of Jesu Christ, rose up with fervour exceeding great, and said: "Let us be going in the name of God"; and he took for his companions Brother Masseo and Brother Agnolo, holy men. And setting forth with fervent zeal of spirit, taking no thought for road or way, they came unto a little town that was called Savurni-

ano, and Saint Francis set himself to preach, but first he bade the swallows that were twittering keep silence till such time as he had done the preaching ; and the swallows were obedient to his word, and he preached there with such fervour that all the men and women of that town minded through their devotion to come after him and leave the town, but Saint Francis suffered them not, saying : “ Make not ill haste nor leave your homes ; and I will ordain for you what ye should do for the salvation of your souls ” : and therewith he resolved to found the third Order, for the salvation of all the world. And so leaving them much comforted and with minds firm set on penitence, he departed thence and came unto a place between Cannaio and Bevagno. And as with great fervour he was going on the way, he lifted up his eyes and beheld some trees hard by the road whereon sat a great company of birds well-nigh without number ; whereat Saint Francis marvelled, and said to his companions : “ Ye shall wait for me here upon the way and I will go to preach unto my little sisters, the birds.” And he went unto the field and began to preach unto the birds that were on the ground ; and immediately those that were on the trees flew down to him, and they all of them remained still and quiet together, until Saint Francis made an end of preaching : and not even then did they depart, until he had given them his blessing. And according to what Brother Masseo afterwards related unto Brother Jacques da Massa, Saint Francis went among them touching them with

The his cloak, howbeit none moved from out his place.  
**sermon** The sermon that Saint Francis preached unto  
**to the birds** them was after this fashion : " My little sisters,  
the birds, much bounden are ye unto God, your  
Creator, and alway in every place ought ye to  
praise Him, for that He hath given you liberty  
to fly about everywhere, and hath also given you  
double and triple raiment ; moreover He pre-  
served your seed in the ark of Noah, that your  
race might not perish out of the world ; still  
more are ye behoden to Him for the element of  
the air which He hath appointed for you ; beyond  
all this, ye sow not, neither do you reap ; and  
God feedeth you, and giveth you the streams and  
fountains for your drink ; the mountains and the  
valleys for your refuge and the high trees whereon  
to make your nests ; and because ye know not  
how to spin or sew, God clotheth you, you and  
your children ; wherefore your Creator loveth  
you much, seeing that He hath bestowed on you  
so many benefits ; and therefore, my little sisters,  
beware of the sin of ingratitude, and study always  
to give praises unto God." Whenas Saint  
Francis spake these words to them, those birds  
began all of them to open their beaks, and stretch  
their necks, and spread their wings, and reverently  
bend their heads down to the ground, and by their  
acts and by their songs to show that the holy  
Father gave them joy exceeding great. And  
Saint Francis rejoiced with them, and was glad,  
and marvelled much at so great a company of  
birds and their most beautiful diversity and their  
good heed and sweet friendliness, for the which

cause he devoutly praised their Creator in them. St Francis, the standard-bearer of Christ

At the last, having ended the preaching, Saint Francis made over them the sign of the cross, and gave them leave to go away; and thereby all the birds with wondrous singing rose up in the air; and then, in the fashion of the cross that Saint Francis had made over them, divided themselves into four parts; and the one part flew toward the East, and the other towards the West, and the other towards the South, and the fourth towards the North, and each flight went on its way singing wondrous songs; signifying thereby that even as Saint Francis, the standard-bearer of the Cross of Christ, had preached unto them, and made over them the sign of the cross, after the pattern of which they separated themselves unto the four parts of the world: even so the preaching of the Cross of Christ, renewed by Saint Francis, would be carried by him and the brothers throughout all the world; the which brothers, after the fashion of the birds, possessing nothing of their own in this world, commit their lives wholly unto the providence of God.

### Chapter XVII

*How a little boy-brother, while Saint Francis was praying in the night, saw Christ and the Virgin Mary and many other saints hold converse with him*

A LIT'TLE boy, very pure and innocent, was received into the Order, while Saint Francis was yet alive; and he abode in a little

The House, wherein of necessity the brothers slept vision of on mats. It befell on a time that Saint Francis St Francis came to the said House, and in the evening, after Compline, lay down to sleep, to the intent that he might be able to rise up in the night to pray while the other brothers slept, as it was his wont to do. The aforesaid little boy set it in his heart diligently to keep watch upon the ways of Saint Francis, that he might come to know of his sanctity, and chiefly that he might learn what he did by night when he arose. And to the end that sleep might not play him false, that little boy laid him down to sleep close to Saint Francis, and tied his cord to the cord of Saint Francis, for to be ware when he got up; and of this Saint Francis perceived naught. But at night in his first sleep, when all the other brothers were sleeping, he arose and found his cord thus tied: and softly he loosed it, so that the little boy was not aware thereof, and Saint Francis went out alone into the wood that was hard by the House, and entered into a little cell that was therein, and set himself to pray. After some short space the little boy awoke, and finding the cord unloosed, and Saint Francis gone, arose and went in search of him: and finding the door open that led into the wood, he deemed that Saint Francis had gone thither, and so entered into the wood. And coming close up to the place where Saint Francis was praying, he began to hear much discourse; and drawing nigher for to see and learn what it was he heard, he beheld a marvellous light that shone round about Saint

Francis, and therein he saw Christ and the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist and the Evangelist, and a great multitude of angels, speaking with Saint Francis. When this he saw and heard, the little boy fell on the ground in a deep swoon ; so when the mystery of this holy vision was ended, Saint Francis, returning to the House, stumbled upon the little boy lying as though dead upon the ground ; and in pity lifted him up and bore him in his arms, as doth the good shepherd with his sheep. Learning thereafter from him how he had seen the vision set forth above, he bade him reveal it unto no man so long as he should be alive. And the little boy grew up in great favour with God and devotion to Saint Francis, and became a man of worth in the Order, and after the death of Saint Francis he revealed unto the brothers the vision set forth above.

### Chapter XVIII

*Of the marvellous chapter that Saint Francis held at Saint Mary of the Angels, whereat were more than five thousand brothers*

THE faithful servant of Christ, Francis, on a time held a general chapter at Saint Mary of the Angels, at the which chapter were gathered together more than five thousand brothers ; and thither came Saint Dominic, head and founder of the Order of the Preaching Brothers, who was then on his way from Borgogna to Rome. And hearing of the Congregation of the chapter

called that Saint Francis was holding on the plain of  
“the Saint Mary of the Angels, he went to see it with  
Chapter of the seven brothers of his Order. There was also at  
Trellises” the said chapter a cardinal most devoted to Saint  
Francis, who had prophesied unto him that he  
would be Pope, and it so came to pass ; the which  
cardinal had come of set purpose from Perugia,  
where the Court was, to Assisi ; every day he  
came to see Saint Francis and his brothers, and  
sometimes he sang the Mass, and sometimes he  
preached unto the brothers in chapter, and the  
said cardinal felt exceeding great joy and devotion  
whosoever he came to visit this holy company.  
And beholding the brothers sitting on the plain  
round about Saint Mary’s in companies, here  
forty, there a hundred, there eighty together, all  
busied in discourse of God, in prayers, in tears,  
in works of love, and all abiding in such silence  
and such modesty that there was heard no noise  
or sound of contention ; and marvelling at so  
great a multitude so set in order, with tears  
and deep devotion, he said : “ Of a truth this is  
the camp and the army of the knights of God.”  
Nor was there heard in so great a multitude or  
idle speech or foolish jest, but, wheresoe’er a  
company of brothers was gathered together, they  
either prayed, or said the office, and bewailed  
their sins or those of their benefactors, or dis-  
coursed concerning the salvation of souls. In  
the camp were roofs of willows and rush-mats,  
set apart in groups according to the brothers of  
diverse provinces ; and thereby was this chapter  
called the Chapter of the Trellises, or of the

Rush-mats ; their bed was the bare ground, and "The army of the knights of God" for such as had it a little straw, their pillows were stones or logs of wood. For the which cause so great devotion towards them was felt by whoso heard or saw, and so great was the fame of their sanctity, that from the Court of the Pope which was at that time in Perugia, and from the other parts of the valley of Spoleto, there came many counts, barons, and knights, and other gentle folk, and many country folk, and cardinals and bishops and abbots with many other clergy, for to see this holy gathering, so great and so humble, such as the world had never seen before, of so many holy men together : and chiefest of all they came to see the head and most holy father of that holy band, the which had robbed the world of such fair prey, and gathered together so devout and fair a flock to follow in the foot-steps of the true Shepherd Jesu Christ. The chapter general being then all assembled, the holy father of all and minister general, Saint Francis, in fervour of spirit set forth the word of God : and preached unto them in a loud voice as the Holy Spirit made him to speak ; and as argument of his sermon he set forth unto them these words : " My little children, great things have we promised unto God, much greater far hath God promised unto us, if we observe what we have promised unto Him ; and of a surety shall we behold what hath been promised unto us. Short-lived is the joy of the world ; the pain that follows it is everlasting ; little are the pains of this life, but the glory of the other life is infin-

St ite." And on these words preaching most devoutly, he comforted the brothers and turned their hearts into obedience and reverence for holy Mother Church, and unto brotherly love, to pray God for all men, and to have patience in the adversities of the world, and temperance in prosperity, to observe modesty and angelic chastity, and to have peace and concord with God and with men and with their own conscience, and the love and practice of most holy poverty. And therewith he said unto them: "I command you, by the merit of holy obedience, all ye who be here gathered together, that no one of you take care or thought for aught to eat or for aught of the needs of the body, but turn all your thoughts to prayer and praise of God: and cast all your care for your body upon Him, for He careth tenderly for you." And they all received this commandment with glad heart and joyful countenance, and done the sermon of Saint Francis, they all fell down in prayer. Whereby Saint Dominic, who was present at all these things, marvelled exceedingly at the commandment of Saint Francis and deemed him indiscreet, not knowing how to think in what manner so great a multitude could live without taking thought or care for the needs of the body. But the chief Shepherd, Christ, the Blessed One, desiring to show what care He has for His sheep, and what tender love for His poor ones, straightway put it into the hearts of the folk of Perugia, of Spoleto, of Fuligno, of Spello and of Assisi, and the rest of the country round about, to bring food and drink

unto this holy company. And lo ! all at once St Fran-  
from the parts aforesaid came men with sumpter cis and S  
beasts, horses and carts, with loads of bread, of <sup>Dominic</sup>  
wine, of honey-combs, and cheese, and other good  
things to eat, according as the poor of Christ  
had need. Besides this, brought they napkins,  
pitchers, cups, glasses and other vessels, to serve  
the needs of so great a multitude : and he  
deemed himself blessed whoso could bring most  
or serve most diligently ; in such sort that even  
the knights and the barons and other gentle folk  
that came to see, did service unto them with  
great devotion and humility. For the which  
cause, Saint Dominic, seeing these things, and  
knowing of a truth that God's Providence was  
working in them, humbly repented him that he had  
falsely judged Saint Francis to be indiscreet ; and  
coming before him, he knelt down, and humbly  
told his fault, and added : " Of a truth God hath  
especial care of these holy poor little ones, and I  
knew it not ; and from now henceforth I pro-  
mise to observe the holy gospel poverty ; and in  
the name of God I curse all the brothers of my  
Order who in the said Order shall presume to  
hold property." So was Saint Dominic much  
edified by the faith of the most holy Francis,  
and by the obedience and the poverty of so great  
and well-ordered a company, and by the divine  
Providence, and the rich abundance of all good  
things. In the same chapter it was told unto  
Saint Francis that many of the brothers wore  
shirts of mail on their bare flesh, and bands of  
iron, for the which reason many were weak and

St Do- some were dying thereby, and many were let  
 minic's re- and hindered from prayer. Wherefore Saint  
 pentance Francis, like a most prudent father, commanded  
 by holy obedience that whoso had either shirt of  
 mail or band of iron, should take it off and lay  
 it down before him, and even so did they ; and  
 there were counted up full five hundred shirts of  
 iron ; and many more bands, both for the arms  
 and for the loins ; so that they made a great  
 heap thereof ; and Saint Francis let leave them  
 there. After that the chapter was ended, Saint  
 Francis, strengthening them in good works, and  
 teaching them how they ought to escape out of  
 this world without sin, sent them back again  
 unto their provinces, with the blessing of God  
 and his own, all consoled with spiritual joy.

### Chapter XIX

*How the vineyard of the priest of Rieti, in whose house Saint Francis prayed, was robbed and despoiled of its grapes by the much folk that came to him ; and then miraculously yielded more wine than ever before, even as Saint Francis had promised him. And how Gea revealed unto Saint Francis that at his death he should inherit paradise*

SAIN'T FRANCIS being on a time grievously afflicted in his eyes, Cardinal Ugo-lino, protector of the Order, for the great tenderness that he bore him, wrote unto him to come to him in Rieti, wherein dwelt most cunning physicians for the eyes. Then Saint

Francis, having received the letter of the St Francis, sore afflicted cardinal, gat him first to Saint Damian's, where was Saint Clare, the devout bride of Christ, for to give her some consolation and thereafter go to the cardinal. Saint Francis having won there, his eyes grew so much worse on the next ensuing night that he could not see the light a whit; wherefore sith he could not go upon his way, Saint Clare let build for him a little cell of reeds, wherein he might the better rest himself. But Saint Francis, what with the pain of his infirmity, and what with the multitude of rats, that did him exceeding great annoy, could find, nor day, nor night, no rest at all. And having yet more of such pains and tribulation to endure, he began to think and understand that this was a scourge from God for his sins; and to thank God with all his heart and with his mouth, and anon cried with a loud voice, saying: "My Lord, of all this am I deserving, and much worse. My Lord Jesu Christ, Thou good Shepherd, who dost show forth Thy mercy to us sinners in diverse pains and anguish of the body, grant unto me, Thy little sheep, such grace and virtue that through no infirmity and agony or pain may I ever part from Thee." While thus he prayed, there came a voice from heaven that said: "Francis, answer me: if all the world were gold, and all the seas and streams and fountains were balm, and all the mountains and hills and rocks were precious stones; and thou shouldst find a treasure yet more noble than these things, as much as gold is nobler

St than earth, and balm than water, and preciou Francis stones than mountains and rocks, and if fo promised thine infirmity that nobler treasure were giv eternal life thee, wouldst thou not be well content therewith and right glad?"

Replied Saint Francis.

"Lord, I am not worthy of so precious a

treasure"; and the voice of God spake unto him: "Rejoice, Francis, for this is the treasure of eternal life, the which I have laid up for thee, and from this hour I give it thee in possession; and this infirmity and affliction is the earnest of that blessed treasure."

Then Saint Francis called his companion, with great joy in so glorious a promise, and said: "Let us go unto the cardinal," but first of all consoling Saint Clare with holy words, and humbly taking leave of her, he set out on the way to Rieti.

And when he drew nigh thereto, so great a press of people came out to meet him, that he would not for this cause enter into the city; but gat him to a church that lay without the city, it might be a two miles' space. The city folk, coming to know that he was gone to the said church, ran together for to see him, in such sort that the vineyard of the church was spoiled altogether, and the grapes of it were all plucked; whereof the priest was sore grieving in his heart, and repented him that he had received Saint Francis into the church. The thought of the priest being revealed of God unto Saint Francis, he let call him, and said: "Dear father, how many measures of wine doth this vineyard yield thee, the year it yields its

best?" Replied the priest: "Twelve measures." Quoth Saint Francis: "I pray thee, Father, that thou bear patiently with me if I tarry here some days, seeing that I find here much repose; and let whoso will pluck of the grapes of this thy vineyard, for the love of God and me, his poor little one; and I promise thee, in the name of my Lord Jesu Christ, that it shall yield thee twenty measures every year." And thus did Saint Francis in return for his sojourning there, because of the great fruit of souls that was manifestly gathered of the folk that resorted thither; whereof many departed drunken with love divine, and abandoned the world. The priest trusted the promise of Saint Francis, and freely gave up the garden unto all that came to him. And it was a marvel to see how the vineyard was all spoiled and plucked, so that scarce any bunches of grapes were found left. The time of the vintage came; and the priest gathered in such bunches as remained, and put them in the vat and trod them out, and according to the promise of Saint Francis got thereout twenty measures of the best wine. By this miracle it was manifestly set forth, for men to understand, that even as the vineyard despoiled of grapes abounded in wine, through the merits of Saint Francis; even so the Christian people, that had grown barren of virtue by reason of sin, through the merits and teaching of Saint Francis oftentimes abounded in the good fruits of penitence.

## Chapter XX

*Of a vision wondrous fair, seen by a young brother,  
the which did hold the cowl in such hate that  
be minded to put off the habit and leave the  
Order*

The **A** VERY noble and tender youth entered into wondrous **A** the Order of Saint Francis: the which vision after some days, through the prompting of the devil, began to hold the habit that he bore in such hate, that it seemed unto him he wore a sack most vile; the sleeves he abhorred, he hated the hood, and the length and the roughness thereof were unto him as a load unbearable. And his mislike of the religious life increasing more and more, he was purposed to put off the habit and return to the world. Now already it was his wont, according as his master had taught him, so often as he passed before the altar of the convent, whereon was kept the Body of Christ, to kneel with great reverence, and draw back his hood, and with arms crossed bow himself down. It befell that on the night whereon he was to go away and leave the Order, he must needs pass before the altar of the convent; and as he passed, he kneeled him down as was his wont and did reverence. And forthwith he was rapt in spirit, and God showed unto him a wondrous vision: in that he saw before him as it were a countless multitude of saints, like a procession, two and two, clad in beauteous robes of precious stuffs, and their faces and their hands shone like the

sun, and they marched to the songs and chants The  
of angels. Among these saints were twain more meaning  
nobly clad and adorned than all the rest; and <sup>of the</sup> vision  
they were wrapt around with so much brightness  
that they wrought exceeding great amazement in  
whoso looked on them; and nigh to the end of  
the procession he saw one adorned with great  
glory that he seemed a new-made knight, more  
honoured than they all. The youth beholding  
the vision aforesaid, marvelled exceedingly and  
knew not what this procession might portend, and  
dared not ask, but stood all mazed for very sweet-  
ness. Howbeit when all the procession had  
passed by, he took courage and ran after the last  
of them, and with great fear asked them, saying:  
“Dear friends, I pray you of your good pleasure  
to tell me who are these folk so wonderful that  
go in this worshipful procession.” They made  
answer: “Know, little son, that we be all  
Brothers Minor coming from the glory of para-  
dise.” And again he asked: “Who be those  
twain that shine more than the others?” They  
answered him: “These are Saint Francis and  
Saint Antony: and this last one that thou seest  
so honoured is a holy brother who died of late:  
the which, for that valiantly he fought against  
temptations, and persevered even unto the end,  
we are leading in triumph to the glory of paradise,  
and these robes of precious stuffs so beautiful, that  
we wear, have been given us by God in lieu of  
the rough tunics that we wore with patience in  
the religious life; and the glorious brightness  
that thou seest in us is given us of God for the

The fierce humility and patience, and for the holy poverty wolf and obedience and chastity, that we kept even unto the end. Wherefore, little son, let it not seem a hard matter to thee to wear the sackcloth of religion that beareth such good fruit ; seeing that, if with the sackcloth of Saint Francis for the love of Christ thou despise the world, and mortify the flesh, and strive valiantly against the evil one, thou shalt together with us have even such a robe as this, and such brightness of glory.” And these words spoken, the youth returned to himself again ; and taking comfort from the vision, chased far from him all temptation, confessed his fault before the guardian and the brothers, and from thenceforth desired the roughness of penitence and of dress, and ended his days in the Order in great sanctity.

### Chapter XXI

*Of the most holy miracle that Saint Francis wrought when he converted the fierce wolf of Agobio.*

WHAT time Saint Francis abode in the city of Agobio, there appeared in the country of Agobio an exceeding great wolf, terrible and fierce, the which not only devoured animals, but also men, in so much that all the city folk stood in great fear, sith oft-times he came near to the city, and all men when they went out arrayed them in arms as it were for the battle, and yet withal they might not avail to defend them against him whensoe'er any chanced on him alone;

for fear of this wolf they were come to such a St  
pass that none durst go forth of that place. For Francis  
the which matter, Saint Francis having compas- goes forth  
sion on the people of that land, wished to go to the  
forth unto that wolf, albeit the townsfolk all  
gave counsel against it: and making the sign of  
the most holy cross he went forth from that  
place with his companions, putting all his trust  
in God. And the others misdoubting to go  
further, Saint Francis took the road to the place  
where the wolf lay. And lo ! in the sight of  
many of the townsfolk that had come out to see  
this miracle, the said wolf made at Saint Francis  
with open mouth: and coming up to him, Saint  
Francis made over him the sign of the most holy  
cross, and called him to him, and bespeak him  
thus : "Come hither, brother wolf: I command  
thee in the name of Christ that thou do no  
harm, nor to me nor to any one." O wondrous  
thing ! Whenas Saint Francis had made the  
sign of the cross, right so the terrible wolf shut  
his jaws and stayed his running: and when he  
was bid, came gently as a lamb and lay him down  
at the feet of Saint Francis. Thereat Saint  
Francis thus bespeak him : "Brother wolf,  
much harm hast thou wrought in these parts and  
done grievous ill, spoiling and slaying the creatures  
of God, without His leave : and not alone hast  
thou slain and devoured the brute beasts, but hast  
dared to slay men, made in the image of God ; for  
the which cause thou art deserving of the gibbet  
as a thief and a most base murderer ; and all  
men cry out and murmur against thee and all this

He land is thine enemy. But I would fain, brother subdues wolf, make peace between thee and these ; so the wolf that thou mayest no more offend them, and they may forgive thee all thy past offences, and nor men nor dogs pursue thee any more.” At these words the wolf with movements of body, tail, and eyes, and by the bending of his head, gave sign of his assent to what Saint Francis said, and of his will to abide thereby. Then spake Saint Francis again : “ Brother wolf, sith it pleaseth thee to make and hold this peace, I promise thee that I will see to it that the folk of this place give thee food alway so long as thou shalt live, so that thou suffer not hunger any more ; for that I wot well that through hunger hast thou wrought all this ill. But sith I win for thee this grace, I will, brother wolf, that thou promise me to do none hurt to any more, be he man or beast ; dost promise me this ? ” And the wolf gave clear token by the bowing of his head that he promised. Then quoth Saint Francis : “ Brother wolf, I will that thou plight me troth for this promise, that I may trust thee full well.” And Saint Francis stretching forth his hand to take pledge of his troth, the wolf lifted up his right paw before him and laid it gently on the hand of Saint Francis, giving thereby such sign of good faith as he was able. Then quoth Saint Francis : “ Brother wolf, I bid thee in the name of Jesu Christ come now with me, nothing doubting, and let us go stablish this peace in God’s name.” And the wolf obedient set forth with him, in fashion as a gentle lamb ; whereat

the townsfolk made mighty marvel, beholding. and  
And straightway the bruit of it was spread makes a  
through all the city, so that all the people, men- pact of  
folk and women-folk, great and small, young and peace  
old, gat them to the market place for to see the  
wolf with Saint Francis. And the people being  
gathered all together, Saint Francis rose up to  
preach, avizing them among other matters how  
for their sins God suffered such things to be, and  
pestilences also : and how far more parlous is the  
flame of hell, the which must vex the damned  
eternally, than is the fury of the wolf that can  
but slay the body ; how much then should men  
fear the jaws of hell, when such a multitude  
stands sore adread of the jaws of one so small a  
beast ? Then turn ye, beloved, unto God, and  
work out a fit repentance for your sins ; and  
God will set you free from the wolf in this pre-  
sent time, and in time to come from out the fires  
of hell." And done the preaching, Saint  
Francis, said : " Give ear, my brothers : brother  
wolf, who standeth here before ye, hath pro-  
mised me and plighted troth to make his peace  
with you, and to offend no more in any thing ;  
and do ye promise him to give him every day  
whate'er he needs : and I am made his surety  
unto you that he will keep this pact of peace  
right steadfastly." Then promised all the folk  
with one accord to give him food abidingly.  
Then quoth Saint Francis to the wolf before  
them all : " And thou, brother wolf, dost thou  
make promise to keep firm this pact of peace,  
that thou offend not man nor beast nor any

The joy creature?" And the wolf knelt him down and of the bowed his head: and with gentle movements of people his body, tail, and eyes, gave sign as best he could that he would keep their pact entire. Quoth Saint Francis: "Brother wolf, I wish that as thou hast pledged me thy faith to this promise without the gate, even so shouldest thou pledge me thy faith to thy promise before all the people, and that thou play me not false for my promise, and the surety that I have given for thee." Then the wolf lifting up his right paw, laid it in the hand of Saint Francis. Therewith, this act, and the others set forth above, wrought such great joy and marvel in all the people, both through devotion to the saint, and through the newness of the miracle, and through the peace with the wolf, that all began to lift up their voices unto heaven praising and blessing God, that had sent Saint Francis unto them, who by his merits had set them free from the jaws of the cruel beast. And thereafter this same wolf lived two years in Agobio; and went like a tame beast in and out the houses, from door to door, without doing hurt to any or any doing hurt to him, and was courteously nourished by the people; and as he passed thuswise through the country and the houses, never did any dog bark behind him. At length, after a two years' space, brother wolf died of old age: whereat the townsfolk sorely grieved, sith marking him pass so gently through the city, they minded them the better of the virtue and the sanctity of Saint Francis.

## Chapter XXII

### *How Saint Francis tamed the wild turtle-doves*

IT befell on a day that a certain young man St Francis had caught many turtle-doves: and as he was carrying them for sale, Saint Francis, who had ever a tender pity for gentle creatures, met him, and looking on those turtle-doves with pitying eyes, said to the youth: "I pray thee give them me, that birds so gentle, unto which the Scripture liketh chaste and humble and faithful souls, may not fall into the hands of cruel men that would kill them." Forthwith, inspired of God, he gave them all to Saint Francis; and he receiving them into his bosom, began to speak tenderly unto them: "O my sisters, simple-minded turtle-doves, innocent and chaste, why have ye let yourselves be caught? Now would I fain deliver you from death and make you nests, that ye may be fruitful and multiply, according to the commandments of your Creator." And Saint Francis went and made nests for them all: and they abiding therein, began to lay their eggs and hatch them before the eyes of the brothers: and so tame were they, they dwelt with Saint Francis and all the other brothers as though they had been fowls that had always fed from their hands, and never did they go away until Saint Francis with his blessing gave them leave to go. And to the young man who had given them to him, Saint Francis said: "My little son, thou wilt yet be a brother in this Order and do precious

St service unto Jesu Christ. And so it came to Francis, pass ; for the said youth became a brother and the lived in the Order in great sanctity.  
watchful Shepherd

### Chapter XXIII

*How Saint Francis delivered the brother that was in sin with the devil*

AS Saint Francis was on a time at prayer in the House of Portiuncula, through divine revelation he saw the whole House surrounded and besieged by devils, as it were by a great army, but no one of them could win an entrance into the House ; for the brothers were of so great sanctity, that the devils could find none within whom to enter. But as they so continued, it happened on a day that one of these brothers was offended with another, and thought in his heart how he might accuse him and take vengeance upon him ; for the which cause, while his heart was devising this wicked thought, the devil, finding the door open, entered into the House and set himself upon the neck of that brother. But the heedful and pitying Shepherd, who was ever keeping watch over his flock, seeing that the wolf had entered to devour his little sheep, at once let call to him that brother, and bade him forthwith disclose the venom of hate he had conceived against his neighbour, through the which he had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Whereat he being affrighted at seeing that the holy Father knew the secret of his heart, discovered unto him all its venom and

malice, and acknowledged his fault, and humbly St  
begged for penance and mercy ; and this done, Francis  
whenas he was absolved from his sin and had and the  
received penance, immediately, before the face Soldan  
of Saint Francis, the devil was away ; and the  
brother thus set free from the hands of that cruel  
beast, through the loving-kindness of the good  
Shepherd, gave thanks to God ; and going back  
corrected and admonished to the flock of the holy  
Shepherd, he lived thereafter in great sanctity.

### Chapter XXIV

*How Saint Francis won over to the faith the  
Soldan of Babylon*

WROUGHT on by zeal for the faith of Christ and the desire of martyrdom, Saint Francis went on a time over sea with twelve his companions, to get them straight to the Soldan of Babylon, and they came to a land of the Saracens, where the passes were guarded by men so cruel that none of Christian folk that passed that way might avail to scape from death ; but it pleased God that they were not slain, but taken alive, and beaten and bound were brought before the Soldan. And being come before him, Saint Francis, taught of the Holy Spirit, preached so divinely of the faith of Christ, that for the sake thereof was he willing to go even through the fire. Whereby the Soldan began to feel exceeding great devotion toward him, for the constancy of his faith, as for the contempt of the world that he saw in him (for that he would

His take of him no gift, albeit so very poor), and eke promise for the fervour of martyrdom that he saw in him. From that time forth the Soldan heard him gladly and prayed him that oft-times he would come before him, freely granting to him and his companions leave to preach wheresoever they would ; and he gave them a sign whereby they might be safe from the hurt of any man. Having such free license, St Francis sent his brothers and other companions two by two into divers parts of the Saracens to preach the faith of Christ. Seeing in the end that he could reap no more fruit in those parts, Saint Francis by divine revelation set himself with all his companions to return to the land of the faithful ; and when they were all gathered together, he came again to the Soldan and took leave of him to depart. And therewithal said the Soldan unto him : “ Brother Francis, I would gladly turn me to the faith of Christ, but I fear to do so now ; for if these were ware of it, they would kill both thee and me with all thy company ; and inasmuch as thou canst yet do much of good, and I have certain matters of great weight that I must needs array, I would not now work both my death and thine, but teach me now how I may be saved ; sith ready am I to do all that thou mayest lay on me.” Then spake St Francis : “ My lord, I must now go from you ; but after that I have returned to my country and have gone to heaven, by the grace of God, after my death, then, according as it shall please God, will I send thee two of my brothers, at whose hands thou shalt

receive the holy Baptism of Christ, and shalt be The saved, even as my Lord Jesu Christ hath revealed Soldan to me. In this mean time do thou keep thyself <sup>receives</sup> ~~Baptism~~ free from all let and hindrance, to the end that when the grace of God shall come to thee, it may find thee prepared for faith and the devout life"; and this he promised to perform, and eke performed it. This done, St Francis returned with that venerable company of his holy companions, and when some years had gone by Saint Francis, by the death of the body, gave up his soul to God. And the Soldan falling sick, waited for the promise of Saint Francis and set guards at certain passes; and gave order that if two brothers should appear in the habit of Saint Francis, they should straightway be brought to him. At that very time Saint Francis appeared to two brothers and bade them go without delay to the Soldan and take care for his salvation, according as he had promised; the which brothers straightway set forth, and crossing the sea were brought to the Soldan by the guards aforesaid, and when the Soldan saw them he had exceeding great joy, and said: "Now I know of a truth that God hath sent His servants for my salvation, according to the promise that Saint Francis made me through divine revelation." Thereon being taught of these brothers in the faith of Christ and receiving holy Baptism, thus re-born in Christ he died of that sickness, and his soul was saved through the merits and the prayers of Saint Francis.

## Chapter XXV

*How Saint Francis miraculously healed one that was a leper both in soul and body ; and what the soul said to him, as it went up into heaven.*

The **T**HE true disciple of Christ, Saint Francis, perverse leper while he lived in this miserable life, strove with all his might to follow Christ, the perfect Master ; whence it befell oftentimes through the divine working, that of whomsoever he healed the body, God healed the soul in the self-same hour, even as it is read of Christ. And because he not only served the lepers of his own will, but moreover had ordained that the brothers of his Order, whether staying or going throughout the world, should serve the lepers for the love of Christ, who willed for our sakes to be accounted a leper, it befell on a time that in a certain House, hard by to that wherein Saint Francis then abode, the brothers were serving the lepers and the sick in an hospital, wherein was a leper so impatient, and so unbearable, and so perverse, that all men deemed—and even so it was—that of a surety he was possessed of the devil ; for so shamefully did he assail with vile words and blows whoso did him service, and, what is still worse, he blasphemed with foul abuse the blessed Christ and His most holy Mother, the Virgin Mary, so that in no wise could be found any that could endure to serve him or was willing thereunto. And albeit the brothers strove with patience to endure the insults and injuries to their own proper selves, for to increase the merit

of patience, nevertheless since their consciences St might no longer endure those heaped on Christ Francis and on His Mother, they all at once resolved to leave the said leper ; but they wished not so to do until such time as they had signified the same in order unto Saint Francis, who at that time abode in a House a-nigh thereto. And when they had told him, Saint Francis went to this leper so perverse ; and coming close up to him, saluted him, saying : "God give thee peace, my brother most dear." Replied the leper : "What peace may I have of God, who hath taken from me peace and all good things, and hath made me stinking and rotten altogether ?" And Saint Francis said : "My little son, have patience ; for the infirmities of the body are given by God in this world for the salvation of souls, seeing that they are of great merit when borne patiently." Replied the sick man : "And how can I bear with patience the continual pain that racks me day and night ? And not only am I afflicted with mine infirmity ; but the brothers whom thou hast given me to do me service, deal worse with me, and do not serve me as they ought." Then Saint Francis, knowing by revelation that this leper was possessed with the evil spirit, went and set himself to pray and prayed God devoutly for him. And his prayer ended, he returned to him again, and spake thus : "My son, I will myself do thee service, seeing thou art not content with the others." "I am willing," quoth the sick man ; "but what canst thou do more than these others ?" Replied Saint Francis : "What-

He heals soever thou dost wish, that will I do." Quoth the leper : " I wish that thou wash me all over ; for I stink so vilely that I cannot abide myself." Thereupon Saint Francis forthwith let boil water with many sweet-smelling herbs ; then stripped him and began to wash him with his own hands, and another brother poured out the water ; and it came to pass by a divine miracle, that where-soe'er Saint Francis touched him with his holy hands, the leprosy departed, and the flesh remained perfectly whole. And as the flesh began to heal, even so began the soul to be healed also ; whereby the leper, seeing that he was beginning to be cured, began to feel great compunction and repentance for his sins, and began most bitterly to lament ; so that while his body was being cleansed without from the leprosy by the washing of the water, so his mind within was cleansed from sin by amendment and by tears. And being every whit made whole both in body and soul, he humbly confessed his sin ; and weeping, said in a loud voice : " Woe is me, that am worthy of hell, for the insults and injuries that I have said and done unto the brothers, and for the impatience and blasphemies that I have spoken against God " ; wherefore for fifteen days he continued in bitter wailing for his sins, and in calling on the mercy of God, confessing himself unto the priest with his whole heart. And Saint Francis beholding so clear a miracle, that God had worked by his hands, gave thanks to God, and departed thence, going into a far country ; because for humility's sake he wished

to shun all glory, and in all his works he sought The soul's only the honour and glory of God, and not his <sup>thanks-</sup>own. Thereafter, for so it was the will of God, giving the said leper, healed in body and soul, after fifteen days of his penitence, fell sick of another infirmity, and died a holy death armed with the sacraments of the church; and his soul on its way to Paradise appeared in the air unto Saint Francis, as he was at prayer, and said unto him: "Dost thou know me again?" "Who art thou?" quoth Saint Francis. "I am the leper whom Christ, the Blessed One, healed through thy merits, and now I go unto life eternal; blessed be thy soul and body: and blessed be thy holy words and works; for through thee shall many souls in the world be saved: and know of a truth that there is no day in the world wherein the holy Angels and the other Saints give not praise to God for the holy fruits that thou and thy Order gather in in diverse parts of the world; wherefore be comforted, and give thanks to God and abide steadfast with His blessing." And saving these words, he passed into heaven; and Saint Francis abode in much consolation.

### Chapter XXVI

*How Saint Francis converted three robbers that were murderers, and made brothers of them; and of the most noble vision that was seen by one of them, the which was a most holy brother*

**I**T befell on a time that Saint Francis was going through the desert of Borgo San Sepolcro, and as he passed by a village called

The three Monte Casale, there came unto him a youth, **robbers** noble and tender, and said to him: "Father, right willingly would I become one of your brothers." Replied Saint Francis: "My son, thou art a youth, tender and noble, it may well be that thou couldest not endure our hardships and our poverty." And quoth he: "Father, are ye not men even as I? wherefore, as ye endure, even so shall I be able with the grace of Jesu Christ." Well pleased was Saint Francis with this answer: so blessing him, he forthwith received him into the Order, and gave to him the name of Brother Angel; and this youth bore him so graciously that a short while thereafter Saint Francis made him guardian in the aforesaid House of Monte Casale. Now at that time there dwelt in those parts three notorious robbers, who wrought much evil in that country; the which came on a day to the said House of the brothers, and besought the said Brother Angel, the guardian, to give them food to eat; and the guardian with harsh reproof, answered them after this fashion: "Ye thieves and cruel murderers, ye be not ashamed to rob others of the fruits of their labours: but likewise, as men insolent and bold, ye would devour the alms bestowed upon the servants of God; in sooth, ye are not worthy that the earth should hold you, since ye respect nor men nor God who created you: then go your ways and see ye come not here again"; whereby they went away disquieted and full of ire. And behold, Saint Francis returned from abroad with a

wallet of bread and a little flask of wine, that he and his companion had begged : and when the guardian recounted unto him how he had driven the men away, Saint Francis reproved him sternly, saying that he had borne him cruelly therein : "Because sinners are brought back to God better by gentleness than by cruel reproofs ; wherefore our master Jesu Christ, whose Gospel we have promised to observe, saith that they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick ; and that he was not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance : wherefore he oftentimes ate with them. Seeing then, that thou hast done against charity and against the holy Gospel of Christ, I command thee by holy obedience, that incontinent thou take this wallet of bread that I have begged and this little flask of wine, and search diligently for them over mountains and valleys until thou find them, and give them all this bread and wine as from me ; and then kneel thee down before them and humbly confess thy fault of cruelty ; and then pray them on my behalf that they do no more ill, but fear God nor offend Him any more : and if this they will do, I promise to provide for their needs and to give them food and drink abidingly : and when thou hast said this unto them, return hither again in all humility." While the said guardian was going for to do his bidding, Saint Francis set himself to pray, beseeching God to soften the hearts of those robbers and convert them to penitence. So the obedient guardian came up with them and offered

Their to them the bread and the wine, and did and penitence said all that Saint Francis had laid upon him. And sith it was the will of God, these robbers as they ate the alms of Saint Francis, began to say among themselves: "Woe unto us, miserable wretches! how grievous are the pains of hell that await us, who go about not only robbing our neighbours, and beating and wounding, but likewise slaying them; yet none the less for such evil deeds and so great wickedness, as we commit, we feel no whit remorse of conscience, neither fear of God; and lo! this holy brother that hath come to us and humbly hath confessed his fault for diverse words he justly spake against our wickedness; and more than this, hath brought us bread and wine and so bounteous a promise from the holy Father; of a truth these be holy brothers of God, and merit the paradise of God; and we be sons of eternal perdition and merit the pains of hell, and every day increase our own damnation; and we know not whether we can turn us from the sins that we have done up till now, unto the mercy of God." As one among them spake these and the like words, quoth the others: "In very sooth thou dost speak true, but come, what is it that we needs must do?" "Let us go," said one, "unto Saint Francis; and if he gives us hope that we may find mercy of God for our sins, let us do whatsoever he bids us, and so may we be able to deliver our souls from the pains of hell." This counsel was pleasing unto the others; and so they all three being agreed,

gat them in haste to Saint Francis, and bespake St him thus: "Father, for the multitude of the Francis sins and wickednesses that we have committed, and the robbers we deem it not possible to return to the mercy of God; but if thou hast any hope that God will receive us into His mercy, lo! we be ready to do whatsoever thou shalt tell us, and to do penance with thee." Thereat Saint Francis, dealing lovingly with them and in kindly fashion, comforted them with many examples: and making them assured of the mercy of God, promised them of a surety to obtain it for them from God, and setting forth to them how that the mercy of God is infinite; and that if we had sins without number, yet the mercy of God is greater than our sins, according to the Gospel; and the Apostle Saint Paul saith: "Christ, the blessed One, came into the world to save sinners." Through the which words and the like admonishments, the said three robbers renounced the devil and all his works; and Saint Francis received them into the Order and they began to do great penance: and two of them lived but a short while after their conversion, and went to Paradise. But the third surviving, and bethinking him of his sins, gave himself up to work out such penance that for fifteen years continually, save only in the common Lenten fast, the which he kept together with the other brothers, he fasted three days in the week on bread and water, going always bare-foot, with one tunic only on his back, nor sleeping ever after matins. About this time Saint Francis passed away out of this

Their miserable life. Now when this man for many years had continued in such penances, behold! on a night, after matins, there came upon him so great a temptation to sleep, that in no way could he resist it and keep watch as he was wont. At the last not being able to resist sleep any longer, nor to pray, he went to his bed to sleep; and as soon as he had laid his head down, straightway was he rapt, and carried away in spirit to a very high mountain wherein was a precipice exceeding deep, and on this side and on that, rocks rugged and broken, and sharp-pointed stones jutting out of the rocks: such that it was a fearsome sight to look down this precipice. And the angel that was leading the brother pushed him and threw him down the precipice: and he falling down and rebounding from rock to rock, and from stone to stone, came at last to the bottom of this precipice, torn limb from limb, and dashed all to pieces, as it seemed to him. And as thus he lay in evil plight upon the ground, he that led him said to him: "Get thee up, for thou needs must take a longer journey yet." Replied the brother: "Methinks thou dost lack discerning, and art exceeding cruel, who seest me like to die from the fall that hath so broken me and yet doth bid me rise"; and the angel came near unto him, and touching him, made all his limbs thoroughly whole, and healed him. And after this he showed him a great plain full of sharp and cutting stones, and thorns and briars: and told him that he must needs run over all this plain, and go bare-footed till he reached the

end ; whereat he saw a burning furnace that he The  
needs must enter in. And the brother having Brother's  
crossed over all that plain with grievous agony vision  
and pains, the angel said : " Enter into yon  
furnace, for so thou needs must do." And he  
answered : " Ah me ! how cruel a guide thou  
art ! for thou seest that I be nigh unto death by  
reason of the torments of this plain, and now to  
rest me thou biddest me enter within this burn-  
ing furnace." And as he looked, he saw within  
the furnace many devils with forks of iron in  
their hands, with the which, sith he was slow to  
enter, they thrust him in it suddenly. When  
that he was come into the furnace, looking round he beheld his godfather, all on fire : and he questioned him : " O hapless godfather, how  
camest thou hither ? " And he replied : " Go  
on yet a little further and thou wilt find my  
wife, thy godmother, who will tell thee the  
reason of our damnation." The brother going  
on a little further, behold ! there appeared unto  
him the godmother aforesaid, all in flames, shut  
up in a corn-measure all on fire : and he asked  
her : " O hapless and unhappy godmother,  
wherefore hast thou come into such cruel tor-  
ment ? " And she replied : " Because at the  
time of the great famine that Saint Francis  
predicted aforetime, my husband and I falsified  
the measures of the corn and grain that we sold ;  
and therefore I burn fast bound within this  
measure." Having said these words, the angel  
that led the brother thrust him without the  
furnace, and then bespake him : " Make thyself

The ready for to take a fearful journey on the which  
fearful thou needs must go." And he, lamenting,  
journey said : " O cruel guide, that hast no whit com-  
passion on me ! thou dost see that I have been  
well-nigh burnt up in this furnace, and still thou  
dost wish to lead me on a parlous journey and  
fearful " ; thereat the angel touched him, and  
made him strong and whole. Anon he led him  
to a bridge, which might not be crossed without  
great peril ; for it was exceeding narrow and  
slender, and very slippery, and had no rail  
withal ; and below flowed a river terrible to  
see, full of serpents, and dragons, and scorpions,  
and it sent forth a stench exceeding great ; and  
the angel said unto him : " Pass over this bridge,  
for assuredly thou needs must cross." He  
made answer : " And how can I cross it, that  
I fall not in this parlous stream ? " Quoth the  
angel : " Walk thou behind me, and set thy  
foot where thou shalt see that I set mine, and  
so shalt thou safely cross over." So the brother  
crossed over behind the angel, as he had in-  
structed him, until he came to the middle of the  
bridge ; and as he was thus in the middle of the  
bridge, the angel flew away : and departing from  
him, went to the top of a very high mountain,  
far off on the other side of the bridge ; and the  
brother marked well the place whither the angel  
had flown ; but left behind without a guide,  
and looking down below, he saw those beasts so  
terrible standing with their heads above the  
water and with open mouths, ready to devour  
him should he fall ; and he was in such fear

that he nowise knew what to do nor what to say; for neither could he turn back nor go forward. Wherefore seeing himself in so great tribulation, and that he had no refuge save in God, he bowed himself down, and clasped the bridge tight, and weeping committed himself to God with all his heart, that of His most holy mercy He would succour him. And done the prayer he seemed to begin to put forth wings; whereat with great joy he waited that they should grow, so that he might fly from off the bridge to the place where the angel had flown. But after some time, through the great desire he had to cross the bridge, he set himself to fly; but because the wings had not yet grown enough, he fell down on the bridge and the feathers dropped off: wherefore he clung again to the bridge, and, as at the first, committed himself to God; and done the prayer, again he seemed to put forth wings; but, as at the first, he did not wait till they were perfectly grown: so that, setting himself to fly before the time, he fell back again upon the bridge and the feathers dropped off. Wherefore seeing that he fell for the haste that he had to fly before the time, he began to say thus within himself: "Of a surety, if I shall put forth wings yet the third time, I will wait until such time as they have grown so large that I may fly without falling down again." And while he pondered these thoughts, he saw that for the third time he was putting forth wings: and waiting a long time until they were well grown, it seemed to him that what with the

The first and the second and the third putting forth  
marvelous wings, he had waited full a hundred and fifty  
years or more. At the last he rose up the third  
time, and with all his force he took his flight  
and flew up, even to the place whither the angel  
had flown ; and as he knocked at the door of the  
palace where the angel lay, the porter asked  
him : "Who art thou that comest here?" He  
answered : "I am a brother minor." Quoth  
the porter : "Wait here a while, for I wish to  
bring Saint Francis, for to see if he know thee."  
As he went in quest of Saint Francis, the  
brother began to gaze on the marvellous walls  
of that palace : and lo ! the walls appeared  
transparent and of such clearness that he plainly  
saw the choirs of saints and all that passed  
within. And as he gazed upon this sight in  
deep amaze, behold ! Saint Francis came, and  
Brother Bernard, and Brother Giles ; and after  
them so great a multitude of saints and holy  
women that had followed his example, that they  
seemed well-nigh without number, and having  
won there, Saint Francis said to the porter :  
"Let him enter in, for he is one of my brothers."  
And as soon as he had entered, he felt such  
consolation and such sweetness, that straightway  
he forgot all the tribulations he had borne, as  
though they ne'er had been. And then Saint  
Francis, leading him within, showed unto him  
many marvellous things, and thereafter said unto  
him : "My son, thou must needs return unto  
the world again, and abide therein seven days,  
in the which do thou diligently make thee ready

with great devotion ; for, after these seven days, The home  
I shall come for thee, and then shalt thou come of the  
with me unto this place of the blessed." Now blessed  
Saint Francis was arrayed in a marvellous robe,  
adorned with stars most beautiful : and his five  
stigmata were like five stars, exceeding beautiful,  
and of so great splendour that they lit up all the  
palace with their rays. And Brother Bernard  
had on his head a crown of stars most beautiful ;  
and Brother Giles was adorned with a mar-  
vellous light ; and many other holy brothers did  
he recognise among them, whom in the world  
he had never seen. Then taking leave of Saint  
Francis, he returned, albeit unwillingly, to the  
earth again. And when he awoke, returning to  
himself and coming to his senses again, the  
brothers were ringing for Prime : so that he had  
not continued in that vision save from Matins  
until Prime, albeit it seemed to him he had con-  
tinued many years. And having recounted to  
his guardian all this vision in order, within the  
seven days he began to fall sick of a fever ; and  
on the eighth day Saint Francis came for  
him, according to his promise, with a great  
multitude of glorious saints, and conducted his  
soul unto the Kingdom of the Blessed, to life  
eternal.

## Chapter XXVII

*How Saint Francis converted in Bologna two scholars, who became brothers ; and how thereafter he delivered one of them from a sore temptation*

St Francis at Bologna

SAIN'T FRANCIS coming on a time to the city of Bologna, all the people of the city ran together to see him ; and so great was the press that scarce with great difficulty could the people reach the square ; and the square being all full of men and of women and of scholars, Saint Francis stood high up in the midst of them, and began to preach whatsoever the Holy Spirit taught him ; and preached so marvellously that it seemed rather that an angel was preaching than a man : and his celestial words appeared even as sharp arrows piercing the hearts of them that heard him in such sort, that in that preaching a great multitude of men and women were converted into penitence. Among the which were two students, nobly born, from the March of Ancona ; and the one was named Pellegrino, and the other Rinieri : the which twain by divine inspiration touched in the heart through the said preaching, came to Saint Francis, saying that they wished wholly to abandon the world and be of the number of his brethren. Then Saint Francis, knowing by revelation that they were sent of God, and that in the Order they would lead a holy life, and noting their great fervour, received them joyfully, saying : " Do

ou, Pellegrino, live in the Order the life of Brother  
umility, and thou, Brother Rinieri, serve the Rinieri's  
ethren"; and even so it was; for Brother <sup>Rinieri's</sup> temptation  
ellegrino wished not to live as a priest but as a  
y brother, albeit he was a great scholar and  
ght learned in the canon law; through the  
hich humility he attained unto such great per-  
ection of virtue, that Brother Bernard, the first-  
born of Saint Francis, said of him that he was  
ne of the most perfect brothers in the world.  
And at the last, the said Brother Pellegrino, full  
f virtue, passed from this miserable life unto the  
fe of the blessed, and wrought many miracles  
efore his death and thereafter. And the said  
Brother Rinieri devoutly and faithfully served  
ne brethren, dwelling in great sanctity and  
umility: and he became Saint Francis' close  
amiliar friend. Being afterwards made minister  
f the Province of the March of Ancona, he  
uled it for a long time with the utmost peace  
nd discretion. A while after, God suffered a  
ery grievous temptation to arise within his soul:  
nd he being in anguish and tribulation thereby,  
fflicted himself with fasts, with scourgings, with  
ears and prayers, both day and night: but for all  
hat he could not rid him of that temptation; but  
oftentimes abode in great despair, sith he deemed  
himself thereby abandoned of God. While he  
was in such despair, as a last remedy he minded  
o go to Saint Francis, thinking thus within him-  
self: "If Saint Francis will look kindly on me,  
and show himself mine own familiar friend, as is  
his wont, I believe that God will yet have pity

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thou, Pellegrino, live in the Order the life of Brother humility, and thou, Brother Rinieri, serve the Rinieri's brethren" ; and even so it was ; for Brother Pellegrino wished not to live as a priest but as a lay brother, albeit he was a great scholar and right learned in the canon law ; through the which humility he attained unto such great perfection of virtue, that Brother Bernard, the first-born of Saint Francis, said of him that he was one of the most perfect brothers in the world. And at the last, the said Brother Pellegrino, full of virtue, passed from this miserable life unto the life of the blessed, and wrought many miracles before his death and thereafter. And the said Brother Rinieri devoutly and faithfully served the brethren, dwelling in great sanctity and humility : and he became Saint Francis' close familiar friend. Being afterwards made minister of the Province of the March of Ancona, he ruled it for a long time with the utmost peace and discretion. A while after, God suffered a very grievous temptation to arise within his soul : and he being in anguish and tribulation thereby, afflicted himself with fasts, with scourgings, with tears and prayers, both day and night : but for all that he could not rid him of that temptation ; but oftentimes abode in great despair, sith he deemed himself thereby abandoned of God. While he was in such despair, as a last remedy he minded to go to Saint Francis, thinking thus within himself : " If Saint Francis will look kindly on me, and show himself mine own familiar friend, as is his wont, I believe that God will yet have pity

St on me: but if not, it will be a sign that I shall Francis be abandoned by God." So he set out and comforts him came to Saint Francis, who at that time lay grievously sick in the palace of the bishop of Assisi; and God revealed unto him all the manner of the temptation and the despair of the said Brother Rinieri, and of his purpose and his coming. And straightway Saint Francis called Brother Leo and Brother Masseo, and said unto them: "Go ye out at once to meet my little son, most dear to me, brother Rinieri, and embrace him on my behalf and salute him, and tell him that among all the brothers that are in the world I love him with especial love." So they went, and found Brother Rinieri on the way, and embraced him, saying unto him whatsoever Saint Francis had bidden them say. Whereby such consolation and sweetness filled his soul that he was as one beside himself: and giving thanks to God with all his heart, he went on and came to the place where Saint Francis lay sick. And albeit Saint Francis was grievously sick, yet when he heard that Brother Rinieri was coming, he got up and went to meet him, and embraced him very sweetly, and said: "My little son, most dear to me, Brother Rinieri, among all the brothers that are in the world, I love thee, I love thee with especial love." And this said, he made the sign of the most holy cross upon his brow, and kissed him thereon; and bespake him again: "My little son, most dear, God hath suffered this temptation to assail thee for thy great gain in merit, but if thou no more desire

this gain, then let it be." O marvel! as soon as Saint Francis had said these words, incontinent departed from him all temptation, as though in all his life he had felt it not a whit, and he remained altogether comforted.

### Chapter XXVIII

*Of an ecstasy that came to Brother Bernard ;  
whereby he abode from morning until Nones,  
so that of himself he was not ware*

WHAT great favour God oftentimes bestowed on the poor followers of the Gospel, who left the world for the love of Christ, is shown forth in Brother Bernard of Quintavalle, who, after he had taken the habit of Saint Francis, was very often rapt in God through contemplation of heavenly things. Among others it befell that on a time, while he was in church for to hear the Mass, with his whole mind uplifted unto God, he became so rapt and so absorbed in God that, when the Body of Christ was elevated, he saw nothing at all, nor kneeled him down, nor drew back his hood, as the others did; but without movement of his eyes, with gaze fast fixed, he stood from morning until Nones, not heeding aught; and after Nones returning to himself again, he went through the House crying with a voice of glad surprise: "O brothers! O brothers! O brothers! there is no man in this land so great or so nobly born who, if there were promised to him a beauteous palace full of gold, would not gladly carry a sackful of dung

His for to gain so noble a treasure." Unto this abstinence, promised unto them that love God, the said Brother Bernard had his mind so uplifted, that for fifteen years continuously he went always with his mind and his face upraised to heaven; in the which time he never stayed his hunger at the table, though he ate of that which was set before him, a little: for he said that none could practise perfect abstinence from that whereof he did not taste, but true abstinence is the being temperate in those things that taste pleasant to the mouth; and thereby did he attain unto such brightness and light of intelligence, that even the great clerics had recourse unto him for the resolving of deep questions and interpreting of difficult passages of the Scripture; and he dissolved every doubt for them. And because his mind was wholly free and abstracted from the things of earth, he, like the swallows, flew high up through contemplation: wherefore at one time for twenty days, at another time for thirty days, he remained alone on the tops of the highest mountains, contemplating heavenly things. For the which cause Brother Giles said of him that unto no other men had been given this gift that was given to Brother Bernard of Quintavalle; to wit, that he fled flying like the swallows: and for this excellent grace that he received of God, Saint Francis right willingly spake with him oftentimes by day and night: whereby were they sometimes found together rapt in God the whole night long in the wood, wherein they twain had met to speak of God together.

## Chapter XXIX

*How the devil appeared many times unto Brother Ruffino in the form of the Crucified, telling him that all the good he did was lost, since he was not among those elect to life eternal. Whereof Saint Francis was ware through revelation from God, and made Brother Ruffino to know his error in lending credence thereto.*

BROTHER RUFFINO, one of the most noble citizens of Assisi and a companion of Saint Francis, a man of great sanctity, was on a time most grievously assailed and tempted in his soul, in respect of predestination ; whereby he became altogether melancholy and sad ; for the devil put it into his heart that he was damned and was not of those predestined to eternal life ; and that all that he did in the Order was lost. And this temptation continuing day by day, he for shame told it not to Saint Francis, yet ceased not to observe the wonted prayers and fasts : wherefore the enemy began to heap on him sorrow upon sorrow, over and above the battle within, assaulting him also from without with lying apparitions. Wherefore on a time he appeared to him in the form of the Crucified, and said to him : " O Brother Ruffino, why dost thou afflict thyself in penance and in prayer, seeing that thou art not among those predestined to eternal life ? and believe me that I know whom I have elected and predestined, and believe not the son of Peter Bernardoni, if he tell thee the contrary, nor ques-

Brother  
Ruffino's  
tempta-  
tion

St Francis him concerning this matter, for neither he nor  
cics and others know, save I alone, who am the Son of God:  
**Brother Ruffino** wherefore believe me of a surety that thou art of  
the number of the damned: and the son of Peter  
Bernardoni, thy Father, and also his father are  
damned, and whoso follows him is led astray.”  
And said these words, Brother Ruffino began to  
be so overshadowed by the prince of darkness  
that he lost all the faith and love he had had for  
Saint Francis, and took no care to tell him aught  
thereof. But that which Brother Ruffino did  
not tell the holy father, the Holy Spirit revealed  
to him: wherefore Saint Francis, seeing in spirit  
the great danger of the said brother, sent Brother  
Masseo to call him; whom Brother Ruffino  
answered chidingly: “What have I to do with  
Brother Francis?” Then Brother Masseo, all  
filled with divine wisdom, perceiving the decep-  
tion of the devil, said: “O Brother Ruffino,  
knowest thou not that Brother Francis is as an  
angel of God, who hath enlightened so many  
souls in the world, and through whom we have  
received the grace of God? wherefore I will  
that thou by all means come with me to him;  
for I clearly see that thou art deceived by the  
devil.” And this said, Brother Ruffino arose  
and went to Saint Francis, and Saint Francis  
seeing him coming from afar off, began to cry  
out: “O thou miserable Brother Ruffino, in  
whom hast thou believed?” And when Brother  
Ruffino was come up to him, Saint Francis re-  
counted to him in order all the temptation that  
he had had of the devil within and without, and

showed him clearly that what had appeared to St him was the devil and not Christ, and that he Francis ought in no wise to consent unto his promptings: <sup>counsels</sup> him “But when the devil should say to thee again: ‘Thou art damned,’ do thou answer: ‘Open thy mouth, for I fain would void on thee,’ and this shall be to thee the sign that he is the devil and not Christ; for as soon as thou shalt give him this answer, he will flee away incontinent. Moreover by this token shouldst thou have known that he was the devil and not Christ, in that he hardened thy heart to all goodness, the which thing is his own proper office; but Christ, the blessed One, never hardeneth the heart of the faithful, nay, rather he softeneth it, as he saith by the mouth of the prophet: ‘I will take away the stony heart and I will give you a heart of flesh.’” Then Brother Ruffino, seeing that Saint Francis told him in order all the manner of his temptation, touched to the heart by his words, began to weep bitterly, and fell down before Saint Francis and humbly confessed his fault in having kept his temptation hidden. And thus he abode altogether consoled and comforted by the admonishments of the holy father, and wholly changed for the better. Then at the last Saint Francis said unto him: “Go, my little son, and shrive thee, and relax not the zeal of thy wonted prayers: and know of a surety that this temptation will bring to thee great profit and consolation, and very shortly shalt thou prove it.” So Brother Ruffino returned to his cell in the wood, and continuing in prayer with many

Ruffino's tears, behold ! the enemy came to him in the form  
deliver- of Christ, as to outward semblance, and said to  
ance him : "O Brother Ruffino, have I not told thee  
that thou shouldest not believe the son of Peter  
Bernardoni, nor shouldest weary thyself in tears  
and prayers, seeing that thou art damned ?  
What doth it profit thee to afflict thyself while  
yet alive, and then when thou shalt die thou wilt  
be damned ?" And straightway Brother Ruf-  
fino made answer to the devil : "Open thy  
mouth, for I fain would void on thee." Whereat  
the devil being exceeding wroth, gat him away  
incontinent with so furious a tempest and shaking  
of the rocks of Mount Subassio, which was hard  
by, that the loud noise of the rocks that fell  
down lasted a great while ; and so furiously did  
they strike the one against the other as they  
rolled down, that the valley was lit up with  
horrible flashes of fire : and at the terrible din  
that they made, Saint Francis and his companions  
came out of the House, in great amazement, for  
to see what strange thing had befallen ; and still  
to this day is seen that exceeding great ruin of  
rocks. Then Brother Ruffino knew of a surety  
that it had been the devil that had deceived him.  
And going back to Saint Francis, he threw  
himself again upon the ground, and confessed his  
fault ; and Saint Francis comforted him with  
sweet words, and sent him back full of consola-  
tion to his cell, wherein as he was most devoutly  
praying, there appeared to him Christ, the blessed  
One, and rekindled all his soul with love divine,  
and said : "Thou hast done well, my son, to

believe in Saint Francis, for he that made thee His sad was the devil : but I am Christ thy Master ; sanctity and to make thee sure thereof, I give thee this sign : Whilst thou dost live, thou shalt no more feel sadness nor melancholy." And this said, Christ departed, leaving him in such gladness and sweetness of spirit and uplifting of the mind, that day and night he was absorbed and rapt in God. And from that time forth he was so strengthened in grace and in certainty of his salvation, that he became altogether changed into another man ; and would have continued day and night in prayer and in contemplation of the things of God, if the others had suffered him. Wherefore Saint Francis said of him : that Brother Ruffino was in this life canonised by Christ, and that, save in his presence, he would not doubt to call him Saint Ruffino, albeit he was still alive on earth.

### Chapter XXX

*Of the beautiful sermon preached in Assisi by  
Saint Francis and Brother Ruffino*

THE aforesaid Brother Ruffino, through continual contemplation, was so absorbed in God, that he became as it were insensible and dumb, spake but seldom, and therewithal had neither the gift of preaching, nor boldness nor eloquence therein ; nevertheless Saint Francis on a time bade him go to Assisi and preach to the people whatsoever God might inspire him withal. Wherefore Brother Ruffino answsred : "Reverend father, I pray thee pardon me and

Ruffino send me not; for, as thou wottest, I have not preaches the gift of preaching, but am simple and ignorant at Assisi." Then quoth Saint Francis: "Seeing that thou hast not obeyed incontinent, I command thee by holy obedience that thou get thee to Assisi naked as thou wast born, save in thy breeches only, and enter into a church and preach unto the people." At this command, the said Brother Ruffino stripped himself and went to Assisi and entered into a church, and having done reverence to the altar went up into the pulpit and began to preach; for the which cause the children and the men began to laugh, and said: "Now look you how these fellows do so much penance that they become fools and are beside themselves." Meantime, Saint Francis, bethinking him of the ready obedience of Brother Ruffino, the which was one of the most noble gentles of Assisi, and of the hard commandment he had laid upon him, began to chide himself, saying: "Whence comes to thee such boldness, thou son of Peter Bernardoni, vile wretch, to command Brother Ruffino, that is one of the most noble gentles of Assisi, to go and preach to the people like a madman? By God, thou shalt have proof in thine own self of what thou biddest others do." And straightway in fervour of spirit he stripped himself in like fashion, and set out for Assisi, and took with him Brother Leo to carry his habit and that of Brother Ruffino. And the folk of Assisi beholding him in the self-same guise, made mock of him, deeming that he and Brother Ruffino had grown mad.

through overmuch penance. Saint Francis entered into the church where Brother Ruffino was preaching these words : " Dearly beloved, flee from the world and put away sin ; render to others their due, if ye would escape from hell ; follow the commandments of God, in loving God and your neighbour, if ye would go to heaven ; do penance, if ye would possess the kingdom of heaven." Then Saint Francis went up into the pulpit, and began to preach so marvellously of the contempt of the world, of holy penitence, of voluntary poverty, and of the desire of the kingdom of heaven, and of the nakedness and shame of the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ, that all they that heard the preaching, men and women in great multitude, began to weep most bitterly with devout and contrite hearts ; and not there alone, but in all Assisi was there that day such weeping for the passion of Christ, that never had there been the like. And the people being thuswise edified and comforted by this act of Saint Francis and Brother Ruffino, Saint Francis re-clad Brother Ruffino and himself ; and so re-clad, they returned to the House of Portiuncula, praising and glorifying God, that had given them grace to overcome themselves, by the contempt of themselves, and to edify the little sheep of Christ by good example, and to show how greatly the world is to be despised. And on that day so much did the devotion of the people towards them increase, that he deemed himself blessed whoso could touch the hem of their garment.

## Chapter XXXI

*How Saint Francis knew the secrets of the consciences of all his brothers in order*

The three  
most holy  
souls

EVEN as our Lord Jesu Christ says in the Gospel: "I know my sheep, and am known of mine"; even so the blessed father Saint Francis, like a good shepherd, knew by divine revelation all the merits and the virtues of his companions, and in like manner their faults also. For the which cause he knew how to provide the best remedy for each, to wit, humbling the proud, and exalting the humble; reproving vice, and praising virtue; even as we read in the wondrous revelations that he had concerning his first family. Among the which we find that on a time when Saint Francis was with the said family in a certain House discoursing of God, Brother Ruffino not being with them during this discourse but wrapt in contemplation in the wood; while they continued thus to discourse of God, behold Brother Ruffino came from out the wood and passed by at a stone's throw from them. Then Saint Francis, beholding him, turned to his companions, and asked them, saying: "Whom think ye to be the holiest soul God hath in the world?" And they answering him, said that they thought it was his own; and Saint Francis said unto them: "My brothers most dear to me, I am of myself the most unworthy and vile wretch that God hath in this world, but mark ye Brother Ruffino yonder, that hath now come from out

the wood? God hath revealed it unto me that "Saint" his soul is one of the three most holy souls in all Ruffino the world: and in very sooth I tell you that I doubt not to call him Saint Ruffino in his life-time, sith his soul is so strengthened in grace, and sanctified and canonised in heaven, by our Lord Jesu Christ"; but these words Saint Francis never spake in the presence of the said Brother Ruffino. In like manner, how Saint Francis knew the faults of his brothers, is clearly seen in the case of Brother Elias, whom he oftentimes reproved for his pride; and of Brother John of the Chapel, to whom he foretold that he would hang himself by the throat; and of that brother, whom the devil held fast by the throat when he was chid for disobedience: and of many other brothers, whose secret faults and virtues he clearly knew through the revelation of Christ.

### Chapter XXXII

*How Brother Masseo obtained of Christ the virtue  
of his humility*

THE first companions of Saint Francis strove with all their might to be poor in the things of the world and rich in virtues, through the which men attain unto the true riches that are heavenly and eternal. It befell on a day that being gathered together to speak of God, one among them related this example: There was a man that was a dear friend of God, and had great grace in the active and contemplative life, and therewithal had such exceeding deep humility

Masseo that he deemed himself the greatest of sinners :  
gains his the which humility did sanctify him and strengthen  
desire him in grace, and made him continually to grow  
in virtue and in the gifts of God, and suffered him  
never to fall into sin. Now Brother Masseo  
hearing such marvellous things touching humility,  
and knowing full well that it was a treasure of  
eternal life, began to be so inflamed with love  
and desire for this virtue of humility, that with  
great fervour lifting up his face to heaven, he  
made a vow and firm resolve never to be joyful  
in this world again, until such time as he should  
feel this virtue in his soul in all perfectness ; and  
from thenceforward he abode well-nigh con-  
tinuously shut up within his cell, mortifying his  
body with fasts, and vigils, and prayers, and  
weeping exceedingly before God, for to obtain of  
Him this virtue, without the which he deemed  
him worthy of hell, and wherewith that friend of  
God, of whom he had heard, had been so richly  
dowered. And as Brother Masseo continued  
for many days in this desire, it befell on a day  
that he went into the wood, and in fervour of  
spirit passed through it with tears and cries and  
sighing, calling with fervent desire on God for  
this heavenly virtue ; and for that God gladly  
heareth the prayers of humble contrite souls,  
while Brother Masseo was in this case, there  
came a voice from heaven that called him twice :  
“ Brother Masseo, Brother Masseo.” And he  
knowing in spirit that it was the voice of Christ,  
answered : “ Speak, Lord.” And Christ said  
unto him : “ What wouldest thou give, for to

gain the grace thou askest for?" Replied St Clare Brother Masseo : "Lord, I would give the eyes <sup>and the</sup> Pope of my head." And Christ said unto him : "And it is My will that thou have the grace and thine eyes also." And this said, the voice ceased, and Brother Masseo remained so filled with the grace of the virtue of humility he had longed for, and of the light of God, that from thenceforward he was always joyful and glad ; and oft-times, when he prayed, he would break forth into sounds of joy, cooing like a dove, U U U ; and he abode thus in contemplation with a cheerful countenance and a merry heart ; and therewithal, having become exceeding humble, he deemed himself the least of all men upon earth. When Brother Jacques of Fallerone asked him why in his song of joy he never changed his note, he blithely answered him, that when one thing brings us full content, there is no need to change the note.

### Chapter XXXIII

*How Saint Clare, at the bidding of the Pope, blessed the bread that was on the table : so that on every loaf appeared the sign of the holy Cross*

SAIN'T CLARE, the most devout disciple of the Cross of Christ and noble plant of Saint Francis, was of such sanctity, that not only the bishops and the cardinals, but the pope likewise ardently desired to see and hear her; and oft-times visited her in person. Among other

St Clare times, the holy Father came on a time to her  
blesses convent to hear her speak of things celestial and  
**the bread** divine ; and as they thus discoursed together on  
diverse matters, Saint Clare in the meantime let  
make ready the tables, and set the bread thereon,  
that the holy Father might bless it. So when  
their spiritual discourse was ended, Saint Clare  
kneeling down with great reverence, besought  
him that he would be pleased to bless the bread  
set on the table. Replied the holy Father :  
“ Sister Clare, most true and faithful, I desire  
that thou bless this bread and make thereon the  
sign of the most holy Cross of Christ, to whom  
thou hast wholly given thyself.” Quoth Saint  
Clare : “ Most holy Father, pardon me, seeing  
that I should be deserving of much blame, if I,  
that am a poor, vile woman, should take on me  
to give this blessing, before the Vicar of Christ.”  
And the Pope replied : “ To the end that this  
may not be imputed to presumption but to the  
merit of obedience, I command thee by holy  
obedience that thou make the sign of the most  
holy Cross on this bread, and bless it in the name  
of God.” Then Saint Clare, like a true daugh-  
ter of obedience, most devoutly blessed those  
loaves with the sign of the most holy Cross. O  
marvel ! incontinent on all those loaves appeared  
the sign of the Cross impressed most fair to see :  
then of those loaves, part were eaten, and part for  
the miracle’s sake were put aside. And the holy  
Father, when he had beheld the miracle, took of  
the said bread, and giving thanks to God, de-  
parted, leaving Saint Clare with his blessing.

Now at that time there dwelt in the convent The Sister Ortolana, the mother of Saint Clare, and miracle of Sister Agnes, her sister, they twain together with Saint Clare, full of virtue and of the Holy Spirit, and many other holy nuns ; to whom Saint Francis sent many sick persons ; and they by their prayers and the sign of the most holy Cross restored them all to health.

### Chapter XXXIV

*How Saint Louis, King of France, went in person, in the guise of a pilgrim, to Perugia for to visit the holy Brother Giles*

S AINT LOUIS, King of France, went on a pilgrimage to visit the holy places throughout the world ; and hearing the exceeding great fame of the sanctity of Brother Giles, the which had been among the first companions of Saint Francis, he set it in his heart and was fully purposed to visit him in person ; for the which cause he came unto Perugia, where in those days the said Brother Giles dwelt. And coming up to the door of the House of the brothers, like a poor pilgrim and unknown, with few companions, he asked with great earnestness for Brother Giles, without telling the porter who it was that asked. So the porter went to Brother Giles and told him that at the door was a pilgrim that asked for him : and being inspired of God, it was revealed to him that it was the King of France : so straightway with great fervour he left his cell and ran to the door ; and without further ques-

King Louis and Brother Giles taping, albeit they ne'er before had seen each other, kneeling down with great devotion they embraced and kissed each other, with such signs of tender love as though for long time they had been close, familiar friends: but for all that, they spoke not, nor the one nor the other, but continued in this embrace, with these signs of love and tenderness, in silence. And whenas they had a long time continued together in the manner set forth above without having spoken together, they parted the one from the other, and Saint Louis went his way on his journey, and Brother Giles returned unto his cell. When the king was gone, a certain brother asked one of his companions who it was that had embraced Brother Giles for so long time; and he replied that it was Louis, King of France, the which had come for to see Brother Giles. When this he told to the other brothers, they were exceeding sorrowful for that Brother Giles had spoken never a word to him: and murmuring thereat, they said to him: "O Brother Giles, why hast thou shown thee so discourteous as to say naught at all to so holy a king that had come from France to see thee and hear from thy lips good words." Repplied Brother Giles: "Dear brothers, marvel not thereat, for neither I to him nor he to me could speak a word; sith so soon as we embraced each other, the light of heavenly wisdom revealed and showed to me his heart, and mine to him, and thus through divine working, each looking on the other's heart, we knew what I would say to him and he to me, far better than if we had

spoken with our mouths, and with more consolation than if we had sought to show forth in words the feelings of our hearts. Through the weakness of human speech, that cannot express clearly the secret mysteries of God, it would have left us all disconsolate rather than consoled; wherefore know ye that the king departed from me with marvellous content and consolation in his soul."

St Clare  
miraculously  
hears  
Mass

### Chapter XXXV

*How Saint Clare, being sick, was miraculously carried, on the night of Christmas Eve, to the church of Saint Francis and there heard the office*

IT befell on a time that Saint Clare was grievously sick, so that she could not go at all to say the office in church with the other nuns; when the feast of the Nativity of Christ came round, all the others went to Matins: but she remained in her bed ill-content, for that she could not go with the others and partake of that spiritual consolation. But Jesu Christ, her spouse, desiring not to leave her thus disconsolate, caused her to be miraculously carried to the church of Saint Francis and to be present at the whole of the office of Matins and the midnight Mass, and beyond all this to receive the Holy Communion and then be carried back to her bed. When the nuns came back to Saint Clare, after the office in Saint Damian's was over, they said to her: "O our mother, Sister Clare, what sweet consolation have we had on this holy feast

Brother of the Nativity ! oh, would that it had pleased Leo's God that you had been with us there ! " And dream Saint Clare replied : " Praise and glory do I give unto our Lord Jesu Christ, the blessed One, my sisters and daughters most dear ; for that with much consolation to my soul I have had part in all the solemn rites of this most holy night, and even more than ye : sith through the loving care of my father, Saint Francis, and the grace of our Lord Jesu Christ, I have been present in the church of my venerable father, Saint Francis, and with the ears of my body and my mind have heard all the office and the sound of the organs that be there ; and in the same place have taken the most holy Communion. Wherefore for such grace bestowed upon me rejoice and give thanks to our Lord Jesu Christ.

### Chapter XXXVI

*How Saint Francis set forth unto Brother Leo a fair dream that he had seen*

IT befell on a time that Saint Francis was grievously sick and Brother Leo did him service ; the said Brother Leo, whilst praying close to Saint Francis, was rapt in ecstasy, and borne in spirit to a mighty river, broad and rushing furiously. And as he stood there for to see who crossed over it, he beheld certain brothers enter into the river, with loads upon their backs ; the which were straightway thrown down by the force of the stream and were drowned ; but certain others went as far as a third of the way over ;

others, as far as the middle of the stream ; some The interpretation  
of the dreamnearly to the other bank ; but in the end they all fell down and were drowned. Seeing this, Brother Leo had exceeding great compassion on them : and meanwhile lo ! there came suddenly a great multitude of brothers that had on their backs no load or burden of any kind and the light of holy poverty shone upon them ; and they entered into the stream and passed over without any peril ; and when he had seen this, Brother Leo came back to himself again. Then Saint Francis perceiving in spirit that Brother Leo had seen a vision, called him unto him and questioned him concerning what he had seen : and whenas Brother Leo had told him all the vision in order, quoth Saint Francis : " That which thou hast seen is true. The great river is this world ; the brothers that were drowned in the river are they that remained not true to their profession of the gospel life, and chief above all to that of the deepest poverty ; but they that without peril passed over are those brothers that neither seek nor possess in this world aught that is earthly or carnal, but being temperate in clothing and in food, are content therewith, following Christ naked upon the cross ; and with gladness and right good will do they bear the burden and sweet yoke of Christ and of most holy obedience ; wherefore they pass with ease from this temporal life to life eternal.

## Chapter XXXVII

*How Jesu Christ, the blessed One, at the prayer of St Francis, let convert a rich and gentle knight and become a brother, the which had shewn great honour and liberality unto Saint Francis*

St SAINT FRANCIS, the servant of Christ, Francis coming late one evening to the house of a and the great gentleman and powerful, was received of knight him to lodge therein, both he and his companion, as if they were angels of God, with exceeding great courtesy and devotion : for the which cause Saint Francis was greatly touched with love for him, bethinking him how at their coming into the house he had embraced and kissed them lovingly, and then had washed their feet and wiped and humbly kissed them, and had kindled a great fire and made ready the table with much good food, and whilst they ate, he served them always with a joyful countenance. Now, when that Saint Francis and his companion had eaten, this gentle man said : "Behold, my father, I offer to thee myself and all my goods ; so oft as ye have need of tunic or mantle or aught beside, buy them and I will pay for them ; and behold, I am ready to provide your every need, since by the grace of God am I able, seeing that I abound in all temporal goods ; and therefore, for the love of God, that hath given them me, I do good unto His poor right willingly." Whereby Saint Francis, seeing in him such gentle courtesy and friendliness, and so

liberal an offering, conceived in his heart such love towards him, that departing thence he said to his companion on the way : " Of a truth this courteous gentleman would be good for our order and our company, the which is so grateful and bounden unto God, and so loving and courteous to his neighbour and the poor. Know, dear brother, that courtesy is one of the qualities of God Himself, who, of His courtesy, giveth His sun and His rain to the just and the unjust : and courtesy is the sister of charity, the which quencheth hate and keepeth love alive. Because I have seen such divine virtue in this good man, fain would I have him as my companion ; and therefore I desire that one day we return to him again, if perchance God may have touched his heart to desire to go about with us in the service of God ; and in this mean time let us pray to God to put this desire within his heart, and give him grace to bring the same to good effect." O wondrous thing ! a few days after that Saint Francis had made this prayer, God put this desire into the heart of that gentleman : and quoth Saint Francis to his companion : " Let us go, my brother, to the house of that courteous gentleman ; for that I have sure hope in God that with the same courtesy as he hath in temporal things he will give himself up to us and will become our companion " ; so they gat them on their way. And when they drew near unto his house, Saint Francis said to his companion : " Wait here for me a little while, for I fain would first pray to God that He may prosper

Christ our journey ; that Jesu Christ may be pleased to appears grant us, weak and poor though we be, the noble to St prey that we mind to snatch from the world, Francis through the virtue of His most holy passion."

And this said, he set himself to pray in a place where he could be seen by the said courteous gentleman ; whereby, sith it was the will of God, as he was looking hither and thither, he beheld Saint Francis praying most devoutly before Christ, who with a great brightness appeared to him in the aforesaid prayer and stood before him ; and the while he saw Saint Francis for some good space uplifted bodily from off the earth. For the which cause he was so touched and inspired of God to leave the world, that incontinent he came forth out of his palace and ran towards Saint Francis ! and coming up to him as he was at prayer, he kneeled down at his feet, and with exceeding great fervour and devotion besought him that it would please him to receive him and to do penance together with him. Then Saint Francis, seeing his prayer was heard of God, and that that which he himself desired, this gentle man was begging for most earnestly, lifted him up, and in fervour and gladness of spirit embraced and kissed him, devoutly giving thanks to God, who had added so worthy a knight unto his company. And quoth that gentle man to Saint Francis : " What dost thou bid me do, my Father ? Lo ! I am ready to do thy bidding and give to the poor whatsoever I possess, and thus disburthened of all temporal things, to follow Christ with thee."

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And even so he did, according to the counsel of St Francis, distributing all that he had to the poor, and entered into the Order, and lived in great penitence and holiness of life and upright conversation.

### Chapter XXXVIII

*How Saint Francis knew in spirit that Brother Elias was damned, and would die outside the Order ; wherefore at the supplication of Brother Elias, he prayed to Christ for him, and his prayer was heard*

IT befell on a time while Saint Francis and Brother Elias were dwelling together in the same House, that it was revealed of God unto Saint Francis that Brother Elias was damned and would fall away from the Order, and in the end die outside the Order. For the which cause Saint Francis took so strong a displeasure against him that he nor spake nor held converse with him ; and if at any time it befell that Brother Elias came towards him, he would turn aside and go another way, so that he might not meet him ; wherefore Brother Elias began to see and to understand that Saint Francis was displeased with him : so, desiring to know the reason thereof, he drew near to Saint Francis for to speak with him, and when Saint Francis sought to shun Brother Elias, in courteous wise he detained him by force, and began with modesty to pray him to be pleased to show to him the reason for the which he thuswise shunned his company and

St to have speech with him. And Saint Francis  
Francis' answered him : "The reason is this ; since it  
inter- hath been revealed to me by God that thou for  
cession thy sins wilt fall away from the Order and die  
outside the Order, and also hath God revealed  
to me that thou art damned." Hearing this,  
Brother Elias spake thus to him : "My reverend  
father, I pray thee for the love of Jesu Christ  
that thou shun me not on this account nor drive  
me from thee, but like a good shepherd, follow-  
ing the example of Christ, seek out the sheep  
that needs must perish if thou help it not, and  
take it to thyself again ; and pray unto God for  
me, that, if it be possible, He may revoke the  
sentence of my damnation ; for it is written that  
God lets change the sentence, if the sinner  
amends his sin : and I have so great faith in  
thy prayers that, were I in the midst of hell and  
thou wert to pray to God for me, I should feel  
some sweet relief ; wherefore again I pray thee  
to command me, poor sinner, unto God, who  
came into the world to save sinners, that He  
may receive me into His mercy." And this  
did Brother Elias speak with much devotion and  
tears : so that Saint Francis, like a pitying father,  
promised him to pray to God for him, and even  
so he did. And as with exceeding great devotion  
he prayed to God for him, he learned by revela-  
tion that his prayer was heard of God, as touching  
the sentence of damnation on Brother Elias, so  
that at the last his soul would not be damned ;  
but that of a surety he would leave the Order,  
and outside the Order he would die ; and even

so it came to pass. For Frederick, King of Brother Sicily, having rebelled against the Church and Elias being excommunicated by the Pope (both he and whoso gave him aid and counsel),—the said Brother Elias, the which was accounted one of the most learned men in the world, being called by the said King Frederick, joined himself unto him, and became a rebel against the Church and an apostate from the Order: for the which cause was he excommunicated by the Pope and the habit of Saint Francis taken from him. And while he thus was excommunicate and grievously sick, one of his brethren, a lay brother, the which had remained within the Order and was a man of good and virtuous life, hearing of his sickness, came to visit him, and among other things bespake him thus: “My brother, most dear, much doth it grieve me that thou art excommunicate and outcast from thine Order, and that thuswise thou shouldest die: but if thou dost see or way or manner by the which I may pluck thee out of this peril, right gladly would I take all manner of pains for thee.” Replied Brother Elias: “My brother, I see no other way save that thou get thee to the Pope, and pray him for the love of God and of Saint Francis, His servant, through whose admonishments I left the world, to absolve me from his excommunication, and give back to me again the habit of Religion.” Then said that brother that right gladly would he do his best endeavours for his salvation: and departing from him, he gat him to the feet of the holy Pope, humbly beseeching him to pardon his

I Brother brother, for the love of Christ and of Saint Elias Francis, His servant. And sith it was God's absolved good pleasure, the Pope granted him leave to go back again, and if he found Brother Elias alive, absolve him, in his name, from the excommunication and give the habit back to him again. Wherefore he set out right joyously, and in great haste returned to Brother Elias, and found him still alive, but well-nigh at the point of death, and so he absolved him from the excommunication ; and putting on the habit again, Brother Elias passed from out this life, and his soul was saved through the merits of Saint Francis and through his prayer, in the which Brother Elias had set such lively hope.

### Chapter XXXIX

*Of the marvellous sermon that the Brother Minor,  
Saint Antony of Padua, preached in the  
consistory*

THAT marvellous vessel of the Holy Spirit, Saint Antony of Padua, one of the chosen disciples and the companion of Saint Francis, whom Saint Francis called his vicar, preached on a time in the consistory before the pope and the cardinals, in the which consistory were men of diverse nations, to wit, Greeks, Latins, French, Germans and Slavs, and English, and of other diverse languages of the world ; and being kindled by the Holy Spirit, he set forth to them the word of God so forcibly, so devoutly, so subtly, so sweetly, so clearly, and so learnedly,

that all they that were in the consistory, albeit St they were of diverse languages, full clearly under- Antony's stood his every word, as distinctly as if he had <sup>marvel-</sup> spoken in the language of each one of them; <sup>lous</sup> sermon and they were all amazed, and it seemed as though that ancient miracle of the Apostles at the time of Pentecost had been renewed, the which through the virtue of the Holy Spirit spake in every tongue; and they spake together one with the other marvelling: "Is he not of Spain, this preacher? and how then do we all hear in his speech the language of our countries?" The pope in like manner pondering and marvelling at the deep meaning of his words, said: "Of a truth, this man is the ark of the Testament and the armoury of Holy Writ."

### Chapter XL

*Of the miracle which God wrought when Saint Antony, being at Rimini, preached to the fishes of the sea*

THE blessed Christ, desiring to set forth the great sanctity of his most faithful servant, Saint Antony, with what devotion men should give ear unto his preaching and his holy doctrine, once on a time, amongst others, reproved the folly of the infidel heretics by means of the animals that have no reason, to wit, by the fishes, even as in old time in the Old Testament he had reproved the ignorance of Balaam by the mouth of the ass. Wherefore on a day Saint Antony being in Rimini, where was great company of

The con- multitude of the fish increase, and no one of  
 version them left the place that he had taken. At the  
 of the which miracle the people of the city began to  
 heretics run together, and among them the heretics afore-  
 said also drew nigh : the which beholding the  
 miracle so marvellous and so clear, touched to  
 the heart, fell all at the feet of Saint Antony to  
 hear his words. Thereat Saint Antony began  
 to preach of the catholic faith ; and so nobly  
 did he preach that all those heretics were con-  
 verted, and turned them to the faith of Christ ;  
 and all the faithful abode in joy exceeding great,  
 being comforted and strengthened in the faith.  
 And this done, Saint Antony bade the fishes  
 depart with the blessing of God ; and all went  
 thence with marvellous signs of joy, and likewise  
 the people also. And thereafter Saint Antony  
 abode in Rimini many days, preaching and reap-  
 ing much spiritual fruit of souls.

### Chapter XLI

*How the venerable Brother Simon delivered from  
 a grievous temptation a brother, that wished  
 on this account to leave the Order*

A BOUT the beginning of the Order of Saint Francis and while he was still alive, there came into the Order a young man of Assisi, the which was called Brother Simon : him God adorned and endowed with so much grace, such depth of contemplation and elevation of mind, that all his life was a mirror of virtue, according as I have heard from those that were long time

with him. Full seldom was he seen outside his The  
cell, and at such times as he was with the devotion  
brothers, he always spake of God. He had <sup>of Brother</sup> Simon  
never learned the art of grammar ; nathless he  
spake such profound and lofty things of God and  
of the love of Christ, that his words seemed  
supernatural ; whence it befell that one evening  
when he had gone into the wood with Brother  
Jacques da Massa for to speak of God, and was  
speaking most sweetly of the love divine, they  
continued all the night in such discourse ; and in  
the morning it seemed to them that they had  
been but a brief space together, even as was told  
me by the said Brother Jacques. And the said  
Brother Simon felt such pleasantness and sweet-  
ness of spirit in the divine enlightenment and loving  
visitations of God, that oftentimes, when he had  
sense of their approach, he would lay him down  
upon his bed ; for the tranquil sweetness of the  
Holy Spirit required of him not only the repose  
of soul but of body, and in these divine visitations  
he was often rapt in God, and became all insen-  
sible to the things of the body. Wherefore on a  
time, when thuswise rapt in God and insensible to  
the world he inwardly burned with love divine,  
and with his bodily feelings had no sense at all  
of things without, a certain brother, desiring to  
make trial thereof, for to see if it were truly as  
it seemed to be, went and took a live coal from  
off the fire, and laid it on his naked foot. And  
Brother Simon felt it not a whit, and it made no  
mark upon his foot, albeit it remained thereon so  
long a time that it went out of its own self. The

The said Brother Simon, when he set him down at tempta- table, before he took food for the body, would tion of the take for himself and give to others spiritual food, Brother speaking of God. Through his devout discourse on a time was converted a young man of San Severino, the which in the world was a youth exceeding vain and worldly, and was of noble blood and much delicate of body ; and Brother Simon receiving the said youth into the Order, put his secular clothes aside in his own charge ; and the youth abode with Brother Simon to be taught by him the rules of the Order. But the devil, that striveth to thwart all good, assailed him with so fierce a temptation and so grievous a thorn in the flesh, that in no wise could he resist the same ; for the which cause he went to Brother Simon, and said unto him : " Give me back my clothes that I brought with me from the world, for I can no more endure this temptation of the flesh." And Brother Simon having great compassion on him, said : " Sit here with me a little while, my son " ; and he began to speak with him of God in such sort that all temptation left him : and when after a time the temptation came back and he asked for his clothes again, Brother Simon drove it away with speech of God. And when this had been so full many a time, at last one night the said temptation assailed him so grievously, even more than it was wont, that for naught in the world could he resist it, and going to Brother Simon, demanded of him again all his secular clothes, for that in no wise could he longer stay. Then Brother Simon,

even as he was wont to do, made him sit down Brother  
Simon's  
fervour beside him ; and as he spake to him of God, the youth leaned his head upon the breast of Brother Simon, for sorrow and distress of soul. Then Brother Simon for the great pity's sake that he had, lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed, and as he devoutly besought the Lord for him, he was rapt in God and his prayer was heard : whenas he returned to himself again, the young man found himself altogether freed from that temptation, as though he had felt it never a whit. The fire of temptation being thuswise changed into the fire of the Holy Spirit, for that he had drawn near unto the burning coal, to wit, unto Brother Simon, he became altogether inflamed with the love of God and of his neighbour ; in so much that on a time a malefactor having been taken who was to have both his eyes put out, he, to wit, the youth aforesaid, for pity's sake went boldly unto the governor, and in open council, and with many tears and humble prayers besought that one of his eyes might be put out and one only of the malefactor's, for that he might not be deprived of both. But the governor and the council beholding the great fervour of the charity of this brother, forgave both the one and the other. It befell on a day while the said Brother Simon was at prayer in the wood and was feeling great consolation in his soul, that a flock of crows began to do him annoy with their cries ; wherefore he bade them in the name of Jesu depart and return there no more : whereat the said birds departing thence, from that time forward were

The no more seen nor heard, neither there nor in al  
miracle of the country round. And this miracle was mani-  
the crows fested unto all the Custody of Fermo, wherein  
the said House lay.

### Chapter XLII

*Of the fair miracles that God wrought by th.  
hands of the holy brothers, Brother Bentivoglia,  
Brother Peter of Monticello, and  
Brother Conrad of Offida: and how Brother  
Bentivoglia carried a leper fifteen miles in a  
very brief space; and how Saint Michael  
spake unto the other, and the Virgin Mary  
came unto the third and laid her Son in his  
arms*

THE Province of the March of Ancona was  
in olden time adorned, even as the sky  
with stars, with brothers that were patterns of  
holy life; the which, like shining lights of  
heaven, have illumined and adorned the Order of  
Saint Francis and the world with ensamples and  
with doctrine. Among the rest, there was first  
of all Brother Lucido Antico, who was in very  
sooth resplendent with sanctity and burning with  
charity divine; whose glorious tongue, taught of  
the Holy Spirit, brought forth marvellous fruit  
in preaching. Another was Brother Bentivoglia  
of San Severino, the which was seen by Brother  
Masseo to be lifted up in the air for a great  
space, whilst he was at prayer in the wood;  
through the which miracle the devout Brother  
Masseo, being then a parish priest, left his cure

I became a Brother Minor ; and he was of so great sanctity that he wrought many miracles, Brother Bentivoglia  
th when alive and dead, and his body rests at urro. The aforesaid Brother Bentivoglia, while abiding on a time at Trave Bonanti alone, to care for and serve a leper, was bidden by superior to depart thence and go to another place that was fifteen miles off ; not willing to abandon the leper, with great fervour of charity took him up and set him on his shoulder, and carried him from dawn even unto sun-rise all that ad of fifteen miles, to the place whither he d been sent, that was called Monte Sancino : which journey, had he been an eagle, he uld not have flown in so short a time : and in that country round there was great marvel amazement at so divine a miracle. Another Brother Peter of Monticello, the which is seen by Brother Servodio of Urbino (he ing then guardian in the old House of Ancona) led bodily off the ground five or six cubits, en to the feet of the Crucifix of the church, front of which he was at prayer. And this other Peter, while fasting on a time with at devotion during the forty days' fast of st Michael the Archangel, and being at iyer in the church on the last day of this t, was heard by a young brother (who of set pose lay hidden under the high altar for to some token of his sanctity) speaking with st Michael the Archangel ; and the words st he said, were these : Quoth Saint Michael : Brother Peter, thou hast toiled so faithfully

I Brother for me, and in many ways hast afflicted thy body : Peter and lo ! now am I come to comfort thee, and to the Saint intent that thou mayest ask what grace soever Michael thou wilt, and I will get it thee from God." Replied Brother Peter : " Most holy Prince of the celestial host, and faithful zealot of love divine, and pitying protector of souls, I ask this grace of thee that thou obtain from God the pardon of my sins." Replied Saint Michael : " Ask some other grace of me, for this grace shall I win for thee right easily" ; but Brother Peter asking for nothing more, the Archangel concluded thus : " For the faith and devotion that thou hast to me, I will obtain for thee this grace thou askest for, and many more besides." And done their parley, the which lasted for a long space, the Archangel Saint Michael was away, leaving him comforted exceedingly. In the days of this holy Brother Peter, there lived also the holy Brother Conrad of Offida ; while they dwelt together in the same House of Forana, in the Custody of Ancona, the said Brother Conrad went one day into the wood to meditate on God, and Brother Peter followed him by stealth, for to see what might befall him ; and Brother Conrad began to pray, most devoutly beseeching the Virgin Mary with great piety to beg of her blessed Son this grace, that he might feel a little of that sweetness that Saint Simeon felt on the day of the Purification, when he held in his arms the blessed Saviour Jesu. And when he had made this prayer, the Virgin Mary of her pity heard him ; and behold ! there appeared unto

him the Queen of heaven with her blessed Son <sup>The Virgin</sup> in her arms, with a great light exceeding bright, and coming near unto Brother Conrad, she laid <sup>appears to</sup> in his arms her blessed Son: who taking Him <sup>Brother</sup> with great devotion, embracing and kissing Him <sup>Conrad</sup> and pressing Him to his breast, was melted altogether and dissolved in the love divine and consolation unspeakable. And in like manner Brother Peter, who from his hiding-place saw all that befell, felt in his soul exceeding sweet-ness and consolation. And when the Virgin Mary had departed from Brother Conrad, Brother Peter gat him back in haste to the house, that he might not be seen of him: but thereafter, when Brother Conrad returned all joyful and glad, Brother Peter said unto him: "O what heavenly great consolation hast thou had this day!" Quoth Brother Conrad: "What is this that thou sayest, Brother Peter? and what dost thou know of that which I have had?" "I know full well, I know," said Brother Peter, "how the Virgin Mary with her blessed Son hath visited thee." Then Brother Conrad, who being truly humble desired to keep secret the favours of God, besought him that he would tell it unto no one; and from that time forth so great was the love between these twain, that they seemed to have but one heart and soul in all things. And on a time in the House of Siruolo, the said Brother Conrad set free by his prayers a woman that was possessed of a devil, praying for her a whole night through, and being seen by her mother, in the morning fled away, to the intent

The no more seen nor heard, neither there nor in all miracle of the country round. And this miracle was manifested unto all the Custody of Fermo, wherein the said House lay.

### Chapter XLII

*Of the fair miracles that God wrought by the hands of the holy brothers, Brother Bentivoglia, Brother Peter of Monticello, and Brother Conrad of Offida: and how Brother Bentivoglia carried a leper fifteen miles in a very brief space; and how Saint Michael spake unto the other, and the Virgin Mary came unto the third and laid her Son in his arms*

THE Province of the March of Ancona was in olden time adorned, even as the sky with stars, with brothers that were patterns of holy life; the which, like shining lights of heaven, have illumined and adorned the Order of Saint Francis and the world with ensamples and with doctrine. Among the rest, there was first of all Brother Lucido Antico, who was in very sooth resplendent with sanctity and burning with charity divine; whose glorious tongue, taught of the Holy Spirit, brought forth marvellous fruit in preaching. Another was Brother Bentivoglia of San Severino, the which was seen by Brother Masseo to be lifted up in the air for a great space, whilst he was at prayer in the wood; through the which miracle the devout Brother Masseo, being then a parish priest, left his cure

and became a Brother Minor ; and he was of so great sanctity that he wrought many miracles, both when alive and dead, and his body rests at Murro. The aforesaid Brother Bentivoglia, while abiding on a time at Trave Bonanti alone, for to care for and serve a leper, was bidden by his superior to depart thence and go to another place that was fifteen miles off ; not willing to abandon the leper, with great fervour of charity he took him up and set him on his shoulder, and carried him from dawn even unto sun-rise all that road of fifteen miles, to the place whither he had been sent, that was called Monte Sancino : the which journey, had he been an eagle, he could not have flown in so short a time : and in all that country round there was great marvel and amazement at so divine a miracle. Another was Brother Peter of Monticello, the which was seen by Brother Servodio of Urbino (he being then guardian in the old House of Ancona) lifted bodily off the ground five or six cubits, even to the feet of the Crucifix of the church, in front of which he was at prayer. And this Brother Peter, while fasting on a time with great devotion during the forty days' fast of Saint Michael the Archangel, and being at prayer in the church on the last day of this fast, was heard by a young brother (who of set purpose lay hidden under the high altar for to see some token of his sanctity) speaking with Saint Michael the Archangel ; and the words that he said, were these : Quoth Saint Michael : " Brother Peter, thou hast toiled so faithfully

I      Brother for me, and in many ways hast afflicted thy body :  
Peter and lo ! now am I come to comfort thee, and to the  
Saint intent that thou mayest ask what grace soever  
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Replied Brother Peter : " Most holy Prince of  
the celestial host, and faithful zealot of love  
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" Ask some other grace of me, for this grace  
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went one day into the wood to meditate on  
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the Virgin Mary with great piety to beg of her  
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of that sweetness that Saint Simeon felt on the  
day of the Purification, when he held in his  
arms the blessed Saviour Jesu. And when he  
had made this prayer, the Virgin Mary of her  
pity heard him ; and behold ! there appeared unto

him the Queen of heaven with her blessed Son The Virgin appears to Brother Conrad in her arms, with a great light exceeding bright, and coming near unto Brother Conrad, she laid in his arms her blessed Son: who taking Him with great devotion, embracing and kissing Him and pressing Him to his breast, was melted altogether and dissolved in the love divine and consolation unspeakable. And in like manner Brother Peter, who from his hiding-place saw all that befell, felt in his soul exceeding sweet-ness and consolation. And when the Virgin Mary had departed from Brother Conrad, Brother Peter gat him back in haste to the house, that he might not be seen of him: but thereafter, when Brother Conrad returned all joyful and glad, Brother Peter said unto him: "O what heavenly great consolation hast thou had this day!" Quoth Brother Conrad: "What is this that thou sayest, Brother Peter? and what dost thou know of that which I have had?" "I know full well, I know," said Brother Peter, "how the Virgin Mary with her blessed Son hath visited thee." Then Brother Conrad, who being truly humble desired to keep secret the favours of God, besought him that he would tell it unto no one; and from that time forth so great was the love between these twain, that they seemed to have but one heart and soul in all things. And on a time in the House of Siruolo, the said Brother Conrad set free by his prayers a woman that was possessed of a devil, praying for her a whole night through, and being seen by her mother, in the morning fled away, to the intent

He that he might not be found and honoured by the  
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 a trouble-  
 some

## Chapter XLIII

youth *How Brother Conrad of Offida converted a young brother that was troubling the other brethren. And how this young brother dying appeared to the said Brother Conrad, beseeching him to pray for him: and how by his prayer he set him free from the grievous pains of Purgatory*

THE said Brother Conrad of Offida, marvellous zealot of gospel poverty and of the rule of Saint Francis, was of so religious a life and of so great merit in the sight of God, that Christ, the blessed One, honoured him in his life and death with many miracles; among the which, having come on a time as a guest to the House of Offida, the brothers prayed him, for the love of God and of charity, to admonish a young brother that was in that place, the which bore himself in a manner so childish and unruly and ungovernable, that he disturbed both old and young of the community in the divine office, and for the other observances of the rule cared little or naught. Wherefore Brother Conrad, in pity for the youth and at the prayers of the brothers, called the said brother aside one day and in fervour of charity spake unto him words of admonition so effective and devout, that by the working of the divine grace he suddenly changed in his behaviour from a boy to an old man, and became so obedient, and gentle, and careful, and devout, and thereafter so peaceful and service-

able, and so studious of all virtue, that, as at the first all the community had been disturbed by him, so were they all content with him and comforted, and loved him exceeding well. A while after, sith it was the will of God, after this his conversion the youth aforesaid died; whereof the said brothers were sore grieving; and a few days after his death his soul appeared unto Brother Conrad as he was devoutly praying before the altar of the said convent, and saluted him devoutly as a father; and Brother Conrad asked him: "Who art thou?" He answered, and said: "I am the soul of that young brother that died in these days." Quoth Brother Conrad: "O my son most dear, how is it with thee?" He answered: "By the grace of God and your admonishments, it is well; seeing that I am not damned, but for certain of my sins, whereof I had not time sufficiently to purge me, I suffer the grievous pains of Purgatory: but I pray thee, father, that even as of thy pity thou didst succour me whilst yet I lived, so now thou wilt be pleased to help me in my pains, saying a Paternoster for me; sith thy prayer is much acceptable in the sight of God." Then Brother Conrad consenting gently unto his prayers, and saying the Paternoster once for him and the *Requiem aeternam*, quoth that soul: "O father most dear, what blessedness and sweet refreshment do I feel! now I pray thee that thou say it once again." And Brother Conrad said it: and when that it was said, quoth the soul: "Holy father, when thou pray-

which est for me I feel my pains assuaged ; wherefore goes to I do beseech thee that thou cease not praying Paradise for me." Thereat Brother Conrad, seeing that this soul was so much helped by his prayers, said for him a hundred Paternosters ; and when that they were said, quoth the soul : " I thank thee, father most dear, in the name of God, for the love that thou hast shown me ; for through thy prayers am I set free from all my pains, and now am I going to the celestial kingdom " ; and this said, the soul was away. Then Brother Conrad, for to give joy and comfort to the brethren, told unto them all this vision in order. And thus the soul of that youth went to Paradise through the merits of Brother Conrad.

### Chapter XLIV

*How there appeared unto Brother Conrad the Mother of Christ, Saint John the Evangelist, and Saint Francis ; and told him which of them had the greater grief for the Passion of Christ*

AT the time when there dwelt together in the Custody of Ancona, in the House of Forano, Brother Conrad and the aforesaid Brother Peter, the which were two shining stars in the Province of the March, and like denizens of heaven ; for between them was there such love as seemed to spring from one and the self-same heart and self-same soul, they bound themselves together each to each by this agreement, that every consolation that the mercy of God

might vouchsafe them, they would reveal the one The unto the other in love. This fact being stab- vision of lished between them, it befell on a day that Brother Peter Brother Peter being at prayer, and most de- voutly meditating on the Passion of Christ, and how the most blessed Mother of Christ, and John the Evangelist, the most beloved disciple, and Saint Francis, were depicted at the foot of the Cross through grief of soul being crucified with Christ, there came to him a longing to know which of those three had the greater grief for the Passion of Christ: His Mother, that had borne Him; or the Disciple, that had slept upon His breast; or Saint Francis, that had with Christ been crucified: and as he continued in such pious thoughts, there appeared unto him the Virgin Mary, with Saint John the Evangelist, and Saint Francis, clad in the noblest robes of beatific glory; but Saint Francis appeared clad in more beautiful vesture than Saint John. And Peter being sore adread at this vision, Saint John comforted him, and said: "Fear not, dear brother, seeing that we are come to console thee in thy doubt. Know then that the Mother of Christ and I above all other creatures sorrowed for the Passion of Christ; but next after us Saint Francis felt greater grief than all others: wherefore dost thou behold him in so great glory." And Brother Peter asked him: "Most holy Apostle of Christ, wherefore doth the vesture of Saint Francis appear more beautiful than thine?" Replied Saint John: "The reason thereof is: because when he was in the world,

Brother he wore on his back viler raiment than I.” John of And said these words, Saint John gave unto La Penna Brother Peter a glorious robe that he was carrying in his hand, and said unto him: “Take this robe, which I have brought for to give it thee”; and when Saint John sought to array him in this robe, Brother Peter fell to the ground, sore amazed, and began to cry out: “Brother Conrad, Brother Conrad most dear, quick, help me; come and see things wonderful”; and at these holy words that holy vision vanished from his sight. Then Brother Conrad coming, he told him everything in order; and they gave thanks unto God.

### Chapter XLV

*Of the conversion and life and miracles and death  
of the holy Brother John of La Penna*

WHEN Brother John of La Penna was a boy in the Province of the March and still living the secular life, there appeared unto him one night a child exceeding beautiful, and called him, saying: “John, go unto Saint Stephen’s, where is preaching one of the Brothers Minor, in whose teaching do thou believe and give heed unto his words, seeing that I have sent him thither; and this done, thou hast a long journey to take, and then shalt thou come unto me.” Whereat straightway he arose and felt a great change within his soul. And coming to Saint Stephen’s, he found there a great multitude of men and of women, that were gathered together for to hear the preaching. And he that

was to preach was a brother, by name Brother He is Philip, the which was one of the first brothers received that had come to the March of Ancona; and as into the Order yet there were but few Houses in the March. This Brother Philip stood up to preach, and preached exceeding devoutly, not with words of human wisdom, but by virtue of the spirit of Christ, making known the kingdom of eternal life. And done the preaching, the boy aforesaid went to Brother Philip, and said unto him: "Father, if it please thee to receive me into the Order, I would do penance willingly and serve our Lord Jesu Christ." Brother Philip seeing and recognizing in the boy a right marvellous innocence and ready will to serve God, said unto him: "Thou shalt come to me on such a day at Recanati, and I will have thee received": for in this place was to be held the Provincial Chapter. Whereby the boy, being very pure in heart, thought that this would be the long journey that he was to take, according to the revelation that he had had, and that thereafter he would go to Paradise; and so he thought to do straightway after he had been received into the Order. So he went and was received: but perceiving that his thoughts were not fulfilled at that time, and the Minister in Chapter saying that whoso desired to go into the province of Provence, for the merit of holy obedience, would have leave granted to him willingly, there came to him a great desire to go there, thinking in his heart that that would be the long journey that he must take, before he went to Paradise: but shaming to say so, at the

Christ last he confided in Brother Philip aforesaid, the appears which had let receive him into the Order, and to him besought him tenderly that he would obtain for him this favour of going to the province of Pro- vence. Then Brother Philip, seeing his purity and his holy purpose, obtained for him leave thereto : so Brother John, with great joy, set out upon his way, bethinking him that, done this journey, he would go to Paradise. But sith it pleased God, he abode in the said province five and twenty years in that expectation and desire, shewing himself a pattern of holy life, increasing always in virtue and favour with God and the people, and was exceeding much beloved by the brothers and by those in the world. And as Brother John was praying devoutly one day, and weeping and lamenting for that his desire was not fulfilled, and that his life's pilgrimage was so much prolonged, there appeared unto him Christ, the blessed One, at the sight of whom his soul was all melted within him, and spake thus unto him : " My son, Brother John, ask of me whatsoever thou wilt " ; and he replied : " My Lord, I know not what to ask of Thee save Thyself alone, for naught do I desire save Thee : but for this alone do I pray Thee, that Thou forgive me all my sins, and grant me grace to see Thee yet another time, when I have the greater need thereof." Jesu said : " Thy prayer is granted." And this said He was away, and Brother John remained altogether comforted. At length, the brothers of the March hearing of the fame of his sanctity, prevailed with the General to bid him

by holy obedience return to the March ; and he His receiving this obedience, set out joyfully on his spirit of way, bethinking him that, done this journey, he prophecy needs would go to heaven, according to the promise of Christ. But when that he had returned to the Province of the March, he lived therein for thirty years, and none of his kinsfolk knew him again ; and every day he looked for the mercy of God, that it should fulfil His promise to him. And in those days he many times filled the office of guardian with great discretion ; and God wrought through him many miracles. And among the other gifts that he received of God, he had the spirit of prophecy ; now on a time it befell that when he was away from the House, one of his novices was assailed by the devil and so grievously tempted that, consenting unto the temptation, he was minded to leave the Order, so soon as Brother John should have come back again ; the which matter, and temptation, and the thoughts of his heart, being known unto Brother John through the spirit of prophecy, he straightway returned home, and called the said novice unto him, and bade him confess himself : but before he confessed, he told him in order all his temptation, according as God had revealed it unto him, and ended thus : " My son, because thou hast waited for me and wouldest not depart without my blessing, God hath given thee this grace that never shalt thou leave this Order, but by the grace of God shalt die in the Order." Thereat the said novice was strengthened in good will, and remaining in the